

IN THE CARBON HILLS



WILLIAM H. REYNOLDS



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In the Carbon Hills

A Romance of
The Land of Coal

BY

W. H. REYNOLDS

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FOREMAN," "THE TIDE OF DESTINY,"
ETC., ETC.



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To Elizabeth Agnew and Emily Wilbur,
in grateful remembrance of their long-continued
kindness to the Author, this story of life
in the great coal fields is dedicated.

FOREWORD

During the immediate years following the publication of my second book* there came to me, unsolicited, some three hundred letters from readers in almost every part of this country. Practically all of these bore messages of congratulation; some merely that and nothing more; others again were even more pathetic than the story that had brought them forth. For many who had read that book fiction was become reality: reality fiction. To one sympathetic reader—a mine foreman living East of The Alleghenies—“Robert Oakley” was the synonym for his own brother, whose life and death were identical to a tragic degree with “Oakley’s.”

From others came such questions as doubtless few authors are called on to answer, among them one seeking to know if Oakley really was lost at Harwick? And what could one answer but the truth, painful as it might be: that the hero of THE TIDE OF DESTINY was indeed one of our industry’s victims: that Little Bob and Helen and Sarah still mourn his passing, knowing that we also know: that Eternity is the richer for his wholesome presence in the same ratio that this Nation is the poorer for his loss and the loss of his kind.

And in continuing these romances of Coal-Land I would say to the inquirer beforehand that Carbonia and *The Effie* of this tale are as real as Collson and Pete, or as

**The Tide of Destiny.*

animate as Bobbie Burns MacDonald and Eldred Morris, and as much a part of United States Mining Life.

As to the events of national scope with which this story deals no single Romance were of length sufficient, without boredom, to more than "touch elbows" with the main issues. Perhaps in a better day some later critic will doubt such history either wholly or in part. We heartily hope so, since doubt in that premise presages betterment. And inevitably that era in our Nation's legal and industrial development must come. Dawn of a mining-day is already on the horizon, which, reaching the meridian of efficiency, will make it no longer necessary to provide made-to-order "God's Acres" between Sabbaths to berth our mining dead: when tragedy shall cease to heap on tragedy: the cry of the widow cease to be multitudinous: the wail of the fatherless as infrequent as it should be and can be with a certain method—a less flexible law.

To the foremen, mine managers, and mining engineers, of the future, speeding in train or motorcar past bare, gray, mounds alone marking where one day stood our present Carbonias and *Effies*, the extent of their predecessors' tolerance—not to say laxity—will be almost unbelievable, certainly not enviable. That there should have been a time in this nation's history when without fear of law employer and employee could play shuttlecock with hundreds of lives, with the life-long poverty and misery of thousands of innocent women and children, all for the sake of a few extra dollars or no dollars at all, will be covered by the same glamour of unreality as our vision of things gone by. Nations, apparently, not to be outdone by their components, traverse "the seven ages" to an aged calm.

To those newer generations out of which may come a Searcher After Truth the author would suggest only a careful review of mining annals of Pennsylvania and its neighboring states for the years 1900-1915, to substantiate

whatever historical references may be contained herein. In the Official Report of The State of Pennsylvania for the years 1909-1910 he will find actual proof of the phenomenal rise of not one Eldred Morris and Surgeon Ambbridge, but thousands, who, as they, denied university education in youth gained it in manhood through the native ability common to that type of our mining men.

But to depict alone the virtues and ignore the vices would be an obvious injustice to the industry as well as the story describing it. For that reason the author has intentionally glossed no error and spared no fault of employer or employee possible in so brief a space. And if there be error in the depiction of that feature of mining life involving the periodic conflict of opinion between employer and employee it is without intent to wrong either side. No matter how fair-minded; no matter what the misery entailed; this must and will continue through the very nature of humanity and present circumstance until there shall be chosen a Permanent Court of Compulsory Arbitration whose decision in every matter of serious menace shall be binding, with the same powers to imprison for contempt as any court of law. We provide thus for petty misdemeanors affecting the welfare and peace of a few; we leave to the uncertainties of men's passions and to chance the welfare of millions.

Another consideration is, out of sympathy for my own comrades, reluctantly mentioned. It is addressed chiefly to them. Every trade has, unfortunately, its Rummels and Pietreccos, its Dominics, Straffords and Maloneys. The means may differ, the end sought is the same, whether the former be a bribe to the fireboss over the saloon-bar, a greenback to the foreman, or leaded weights for the scales. Frankly as one must write in a narrative truly describing the chosen theme I am glad to record, however, the fact that an unusually extensive acquaintance with every phase of the industry, has proved the

incidents herein described as exceptional, and therefore reason why suggestion looking to total eradication should not be omitted from these pages.

In The Land of Coal this is necessarily so. In precept and example to the men in his control the official mining man's wagon must indeed be hitched to a star of the first magnitude if he would succeed. May the future historian of the craft never find more of its tailboard dragging the mud than has fallen to the lot of the present writer to observe, and as much less as possible of any weakness which lowers by the most minute quantity and quality the splendid manhood, the illimitable courage, the sternness yet almost womanly kindness and sympathy for the weak and suffering, the ensemble of manly attributes characteristic of my former companions of The Underground.

WILLIAM HAMPTON REYNOLDS.

Butler, Pennsylvania.

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E P I L O G U E

IN THE CARBON HILLS

CHAPTER I.

WHEN FRIENDSHIP WEARS THE CLOVEN HOOF

It certainly should have been gloomy in Carbonia that night. A long-continued rain made still more desolate the bleak aspect of fields not yet growing, and roads almost impassable still muddier. Instead, there were signs of much happiness in the squat double row of miners' houses chiefly comprising the village. Here and there through a window uncurtained and without blind shadows and fire-gleams from open grates mingled with the light of kerosene lamps and the shrill strain of a steel-strung German fiddle. Fuel is plentiful in Carbonia, and a fire agreeable on a cold wet night in April or May.

In other, better furnished, and better lighted, homes neighborly groups gathered in the "best rooms" to discuss and quietly celebrate the prospective resumption of work, ending probably with a light repast followed by a few tunes on the parlor-organ with singing. These instruments were not scarce in our village nor good voices a rarity: we had many Welsh. But the days of the cheap piano were not come, hence, to the best of my knowledge there were but two in Carbonia proper, and an extra one in the superintendent's home on the hill.

Emily Morris played her oft-moved Steinway when select company came. Mrs. Maloney allowed her two year old "Pathrick" to do the same on hers, sometimes with his fingers, sometimes with a handled beer mug. But at this hour "Pathrick" the chubby was sleeping, and all the beer mugs and "schooners" at Maloney's were making other music. The clink of glass mingled with the harsh voices of strong men in the saloon at the cross-roads.

Trade at Maloney's had for sometime been in a decided slump, and such as the genial Irishman had done was mostly "on tick." But a sudden turn in village affairs had shaken off depression. That day news came to the miners that the new company would start the mine in full the next morning. Every man was to report for duty. Also Maloney had received license for another year, hence the assurance in immediate prospect of both food and drink. After a long period of slack work, uncertain pays, and final bankruptcy, through foreclosure by some financial interest in the nearby town of Colville, it was no wonder Carbonia exulted.

At this moment there stood at the half open door a young man in the garb of the mine, and with a still lighted safety lamp hanging by a stout hook to his heavy leather belt. He kicked a little of the heavy clayish mud from his knee-high boots and shook from himself as much water as he could. Then he entered the warm, cheery, well lighted, smoke-filled room, to be acclaimed immediately by a long line of men crowded at the bar.

The glow of Maloney's lamps reflected in the mirror back of the bar-aisle the upper part of a finely-proportioned body, with deep chest and massive shoulders unusual even among this room full of fine physiques. The frank, dark eyes looking for a moment at themselves in the mirror across the bar, the high forehead from which the miner's cap had been removed because of its wet-

ness, the smooth-shaven face wrinkled just then with a slight smile at the boisterous friendliness of a large hound whose acquaintance with the newcomer seemed of long standing, the look of complaisance yet pity at the scene before him, all denoted intellect and morality equal in proportion to the physical gifts.

He turned from the dog and the picture of men's weakness where men are strongest and set his safety-lamp beside his cap. Then he strode forward among the group to greet a gray-headed, coal-scarred old miner. Several voices clamored the third or fourth time for the young miner to take a drink with them; one or two demonstratively addressed maudlin terms of endearment repugnant to a real man at all times, trebly so to this one at that moment. To all he replied with equal frankness yet determination:

"No, thanks just the same; I only came in to get out of the rain for a minute and get a smoke—a dime's worth, Maloney," he added as the pudgy saloonkeeper reached into the long box of Pittsburg Stogies and shoved them across with the words: "Smoke 'em on me, Morris—new license today."

"So MacDonald was telling me," the miner replied, letting the dime lie on the counter, and, so far as Eldred Morris was concerned it remained there. The men at the other end of the room talked on among themselves, scowling, indifferent, contemptuous, according as their nature, regarding the veiled rebuff just received from the new fireboss. For a mine official to refuse drinks when off duty was unusual to say the least.

Having lighted one of the long, rough cigars Eldred Morris turned to the old man with the dog. The miner was sipping slowly and very deliberately a glass of beer. In common with the rest of those present Enoch Collson had accepted this treat of Maloney's. The young man held out to him one of the stogies.

"Have a smoke, Enoch," he suggested, to which the old miner replied: "No, lad, I'd rather me corn-cob," and proceeded to contentedly puff away, totally oblivious of the fact that it was out. He leaned back against the brass rail.

"I just come along with Est'er or I shouldn't be here," he explained, looking into the room beyond the bar-end where a raven-haired girl moved lithely about, whistling as vivaciously as she moved, and as buoyantly contented, seemingly, as if Maloney's back rooms were a palace and she its queen. Indeed and so they were to Esther, for usually her duties as general housemaid to Carbonia and its environs took her to less pretentious homes than this. "Nor Est'er," ruminated the old miner. "This aint no place for a girl as young an' lively as her." Then, with a feeble movement of his foot: "Get down, Pete, you old ragskallamuffin, an' go off home an' stay with Nellie."

Stepping to the door he swung it open and forced the great hound outside where his overly-demonstrative pawing with clayey feet could add nothing further in that line to the young fireboss's clothes.

"But Est'er wont be here on'y a bit; Wilkes's wants her t' help 'em straighten up till they'n got one stiddy. More's the pity, Eldred, Est'er's the wrong un t'old a place long."

The eyes of the younger man turned interrogatively from the open door of the rear room. "Do you know, Collson, if those Wilkes's the banker in Colville has got to take Number I Mine are the same as you and dad knew?"

"The same old Roger as him an' yer dad was near lynched by the schule deereectors at Carbonville when we three was all young like you an' Tom, an' yer dad an' Roger was blacklisted for spoutin' for the union. Yer dad still spouts a bit, as you know, Eldred," the old man

sipped the last of his beer. "Roger he took to the t'other side of the fence after that come off—had to to keep peace in the fam'ly. Leased a bit of a mine out there an' did pritty well, I hear, an' now through old Amos Rummel he's got this."

"I hear the old pit's to have a new name," suggested Morris, knocking an inch of gray ash to the floor. "It's to be *The Effie* from now on, so Superintendent Turley tells me. I wonder if that's in honor of Mrs. Wilkes or the daughter?"

Collson stood in silent reminiscence for a moment, while the young man took his safety lamp from the wet boards and hooked it in his belt.

"Most likely the Missis, lad, most likely. Effie Wilkes an' yer mother was both schule ma'ams earnin' twenty-five dollars a month an' board around when them two young minin' lads made 'em believe they could injiy life better an' have almost as much money as that teachin' their own as might be, you know," the old fellow's eyes twinkled into the smiling face of the fireboss merrily. "An' fer the balance of the Winter after they had a double weddin' Carbonville had no schule."

Eldred Morris had heard all this before from his mother, also that they had lived near each other at Wilkes's first mine where Elizabeth, the daughter, and Eldred, the son, had played together as little boys and girls will. Morris bore on the back of one hand a vivid scar where his playmate had accidentally or purposely cut him with a razor-like butcher knife surreptitiously "borrowed" from Effie Wilkes's kitchen. The remembrance of this period of the young man's life was much dimmed, the scar and Emily Morris's stories of the vicissitudes of her early married life alone remained vivid. But the room was warm and the rain not quite over, so it pleased the youth to let the old miner ramble in The Past.

"Effie Wilkes," Collson resumed slowly, "was one of them upstart little bodies as is never satisfied, an' Roger was pritty much the same in another dereckshun. An' by the time her Lizbeth girl was born—which was a year or two after the first had died—Effie had Roger turned into a small pit owner." The old miner purposely left out of his narrative a certain part he himself had in bringing about this change. "Your mother was one of the contented kind, an', after all, gets along p'rhaps just as well."

"Different viewpoints, Uncle Enoch," soliloquized the young man. "Each of the girls just followed the line of least resistance, no doubt," he added as they went through the swinging door. The rain had by this time abated. They were met outside by a joyous dog who had refused to go home to keep company with Nellie. "Effie Wilkes's idea seems to pay better; I heard today they'd bought the big house on the hill as well as the mine, and that old Rummel was merely agent for someone else."

"Aye, if he was, lad; if he was. In forty more years of minin' life, Eldred Morris, youn learn that there's more in mine ownin' than appears on the surfiss. That's just as sure as that all the dangers a young man just startin' as a mine official like yerself has to face aint stated public on the Question Papers the State Board gives him," turning for a moment and looking back toward the room they had left. There men were paying—or would pay—compound interest on the round of free drinks with which Maloney's had ushered in the new era at *The Effie* and *The Double Row*.

CHAPTER II.

“MUD FOR POOR NELLIE; ROCKS FOR PETE”

Some days later Eldred Morris took his correspondence lessons and a late copy of *The Colliery Engineer* up to Collson's Batch. It would of necessity be sometime before a positive answer came from Scranton to an inquiry he had sent, and when he and the former school-ma'am-mother stuck on a problem it was sometimes reducible—in a practical sense at least—by the combined efforts of the young fireboss and the old lampman. It were hard to say which was the most helpful to the mining student at that period of his course of study in the great mail-university which even then was doing so much for our men: the free-will offering of Collson's forty years' experience in coal mines or Emily Morris in that she excelled. One of her boys she could—to use her own words—make nothing of; the other was determined to make something of himself. But Collson had other difficulties to solve this night.

It was nearly dark and not very warm, although increasing heat had turned the mud on the road before The Batch into tough clay. The old man, at great risk to his joints, sat in the little yard almost enroofed by a wide-spreading pine. He rose with a threatening gesture as something lying in the grass moved when the footsteps of Morris came nearer, admonishing the offenders to “Keep down, you stinkin' ragskallamuffins!” And until the fireboss was safely past and had taken a seat the fear of the old miner's stick kept them down.

"Whew!!" came in some amusement.

"Light up, lad, light up! We can talk after," Collson urged.

Eldred Morris hurriedly filled his pipe and lit it, and both puffed in silence for a while as if their very lives depended on the quantity of smoke they could produce. Behind them the front door and the back were open as well as the windows, although, as I have said, the night was chilly.

"Do you see 'em?" Collson asked, pointing with his pipe-stem to a dog lying nose pointing the house, and another a short distance from the picket gate.

Morris looked into the semi-dark and nodded. "I can smell 'em," he mumbled between his teeth.

"Watch they don't get up a minute," the old man sidled into the room. He returned a moment later with a chunk of bread and meat.

"I smelled it away down the road," smiled the young man, pressing the tobacco deeper into the pipe-bowl. "Thought somebody was burning a hair-sofa covered with leather."

The old man reflected in silence. He was too busy to talk, mumbling over his bread and meat as one famished. Morris respected the interval; he understood the old miner.

"Aye, lad," Collson gulped hard on the dry bread, "dogs bin like men—some men an' some dogs," he added reflectively, "that Pete hound for instance. Their acshuns stirrin' up trouble an' stink for others as well as 'em-selves." He filled his corn-cob again. "Like some men he's never content wi'out stirrin' up trouble, an' when he's stirred it up he aint content."

Morris thought the allusion anent his father and one or two others who were a source of irritation at *The Effie*. He smoked on and said nothing. The old miner commenced again.

"An' there's wimmin, Eldred, as is pritty much like the tarrier yonder: willin' ter be led inter trouble as they dont like when they'n got it, do 'em Nellie?" addressing a little brown bundle just discernible by the lamp's rays shining through the open door: a mere furry atom of dog lying uneasily (yet not daring to move for fear of the stick) among a nondescript assortment of pots, pans, pokers, stove-lifters, old pit-lamps and old shoes—aye, even a great thick coffee-cup without handle such as one sees in restaurants sometimes. Collson switched again to the dogs.

"They wasn't satisfied to let well ernuff alone an' stay quiet-like doin' their duty at home among rispectible dogs an' things, but Pete, yonder, like the great hulkin' hound he is must leave his job of keepin' tramps out an' Nellie catchin' rats an' coax her away. Here they goes a-traep-sin today over the countryside an' makin' up wi' new acquaintances as warn't as good as the old."

Morris sensed the denouement. He offered no suggestion nor asked any question, but quietly smoked on with his eyes on the two abashed canines.

"I'd just come from the pit tonight," Collson continued, "when Bobbie Burns MacDonald come runnin' up an' tellin' me Pete and Nellie was out beyond Mike Gawan's, 'an' both of 'em's gone mad,' says he, 'an' Mike's a-loadin' up his rifle to shoot 'em.'

"How be 'em actin'?" says I, startin' off without cap nor coat.

"Nellie's a-rollin' over an' over, Uncle Enoch," says the lad, 'an' Pete he's a-snortin' an' a-blowin' his nose likes somethin's in it as he can't get out.'

"Anything else?" says I, like Doc Hilman askin' yer where the pain is. 'Any pecul'ar smell, or anythin' like that?'

"'Yep,' says Bobbie; 'smells like our stove on Sunday

mornin' when mother cuts Dad's hair an' Wallace warms his rubbers.'

"'Skunks,' says I; an' told Bobbie it would be a toss-up whether he'd be a doctor like Hilman or a barber like his mother. 'Youn got signs of 'em both,' says I."

At this interesting stage Collson, who had retained hold on the stick, as well as keeping an eye on the dogs, jumped up very suddenly, moved a few yards and as suddenly came back and attacked the remainder of his improvised supper. "Missed Pete; thought he'd sneaked in round the back," said the old man, putting a piece of meat in his mouth and letting Morris's curiosity grow while he chewed it. This accomplished he continued:

"Well, me an' Bobbie got there at last, findin' 'em pritty near up to the blocks, an' a great hulkin' lot of boys a-jumpin' an' a-shoutin' round 'em an' tryin' to coax 'em back to have more fun. I druv 'em off an' called the dogs; I dassent touch 'em . . . But they wasn't like some humans: they knowed when to quit, an' we come at last to the row. There Mike Gawan—that fool of a stable-chap—was standin' at his door when the percession passed, me in front, Nellie next, an' Pete bringin' up the rear, an' between laughin' says he, 'Collson, yer Pete-dog looks like he's tendin' his own funeral.'

"It's a pity you wasn't tendin' yours," says I, callin' the dogs away from the wimmin folks as was a-laughin' fit to choke at the carryin's on."

"It was Gawan who tagged your name on the grove where the dancing goes on, wasn't it?" suggested Morris.

"It was that," Collson replied truculently, lapsing again into silence while he ate. Morris with difficulty kept a straight face. At length the second helping of bread was down and the old lampman started once more.

"But they got through the blocks with me a-callin' an' a-callin', Nellie a-bumpin' into first this thing an' then that, blind as a bat in both eyes, Eldred, an' both of 'em

a-battin, an' a-battin' to try an' get the dirt an'—that—out," he almost shivered. "An' of course the first place they made for was their bed behind the stove," the old fellow said pityingly, "but I had to drive 'em out, an' have binn sittin' here all night to keep 'em out. But they got in once this evenin', as per'aps youn notice, Eldred, that the house is a little in need of a-airin'."

Morris agreed it was, at the same time finding it hard to repress an outburst he knew well would affront the old man. Collson saw nothing funny in his story; to him it was a serious affair. He was as mournful as a preacher at a funeral.

"Yes," he started again, "it's surely in need of air, an' spite of me that big hulk who's hangin' his dobbin'll skulk round the back every once in a while an' me through the front to head him off. Youn notice if youn go round the back that besides what I've thrown out here I've used up every blessed thing that's loose an' I haven't had neither tea nor coffee tonight," which corelation Eldred failed to grasp until Collson added quite calmly:

"Would you mind holdin' this stick again an' watchin' 'em a bit while I get that pot from under the hound an' make meself a pot of tea; but first bring me in a few chunks of soft mud for poor Nellie an' some of them rocks off the road yonder for Pete. I wont darst go to bed tonight in such stink, not even get up when youn gone, Eldred, as the big ragskallamuffin is quicker'n my legs; nor I dassent shut the doors."

Eldred Morris was a pretty serious chap himself, but Collson's story and the poor old fellow's predicament upset his equilibrium. By the time his old friend brought out a steaming pot of tea laughter had driven all thought of mining problems out of his mind, and there the matter rested until a more appropriate occasion offered.

CHAPTER III.

WHERE SAINT AND DEVIL MET

A few weeks passed with steady work at *The Effie*. Collson's orphaned niece Esther fulfilled her mission with Mrs. Maloney, and spent an agreeable ten days helping Elizabeth and Mrs. Wilkes put things to rights at the big house. The girl's brief stay there had been the indirect means of bringing Emily Morris and her old school-friend together, and this friendship was augmented by a renewed acquaintance between Roger Wilkes and John Morris.

The families were genuinely glad to meet each other. The operator, even less than his wife and daughter, had lost little of the mining-camp spirit of general friendliness as yet. The ultimate issue of success or failure at the new place was too much in doubt for false dignity or mental elevation, and none knew this better than the former miner himself. Also was he shrewd enough to let nothing at that precarious period stand in the way of keeping the men in good humor, and fostering a spirit of democracy, particularly among the better class. His name, with the promise of a sum of money, headed the first subscription paper taken around in the interest of a sick miner. Later he promised his own and his family's attendance at a "benefit dance" to be held in the former Billkin's Hall.

Oddfellow and Pythia of Carbonia had erased the name; the memory lingered. "Fraternal Hall" was the

common meeting-ground of our village. Here men met in beneficial secrecy on week nights, for a similar purpose openly on Sunday. Methodist and Baptist held services alternately presided over by itinerant preachers from the college town. Sunday school also was a feature, which ensemble not being fully as cosmopolitan as our village was completed by an occasional "benefit" or fraternal hop, and now and then a church party for The Ladies-Aid.

Mr. David Thomas, it may be adduced, had suffered one of the frequent accidents common to his occupation as a miner. He limped on crutches to the hall where lust and virtue, the creed of Christ and the wiles of Satan, beauty and ugliness, human and material, had each in turn, and sometimes together, temporary home. John Morris, Uncle Collson, and Donald MacDonald represented the men; Emily Morris, Elizabeth Wilkes, and Mary MacDonald the women folks. Refreshments were provided by the ladies themselves and given gratuitously.

Esther was there, of course. Esther never missed a dance. Temporarily she had a situation at the banker's in Colville, from whence, with persistent vagary, she came to Carbonia with the dashing Rummel, later, escort of Miss Wilkes to the hall. In this Tom Morris had acquiesced. It was his only alternative. The caprices of his vivacious sweetheart caused chagrin bordering closely on fear in the old lampman and Tom's mother.

"Esther should a been a bye, me laddie," Donald MacDonald told Tom Morris; "she's too devilish cleever in sowin' wild oats fer a pritty black-eyed lassie as she."

"Wild oats grow and bloom in the life-garden of boys as well as girls, sometimes, Donald," ventured Emily Morris quietly over a pair of woolen pit socks she was knitting for Eldred, "unless nipped in time by the frosts that come with marriage."

"Emmy" Morris: by which patronymic we knew and

called our beloved old school-ma'am more often than the correct "Emily:" had read Omar as well as Homer in her youth, and Emerson as well as Pilgrim's Progress in her maturity. Also had she perused closely the ever-continued Book of Humanity, which is the greatest teacher of them all.

"True ye are, Emmy; true ye are. My ane Mary says as I—why, hello Eldred," he broke off on the entrance of the young fireboss, "we was just talkin' o' the benefit a' the hall the neet. Tammas, thear, is goin' wi' Esther, of coarse, an' whose lassie may yours be fer the dancin'?"

Familiarity was not at a premium in Carbonia.

Eldred Morris did not answer at once. He pulled a chair toward the door and proceeded to discharge a self-imposed duty. From the upper part of the heavy brass safety-lamp he unscrewed the bottom, having first turned the lock with a key the fireboss was privileged to carry; the miners were not. Then from a little shelf outside he took a small stiff-bristled brush and thoroughly cleaned the wire gauze. Emily Morris looked proudly over her spectacles, a faint interrogative smile lighting a beautifully full and winsome face, mother-love shining from eyes as dark as his. She was quite as curiosity-inclined as MacDonald but—calm as the Scot—she waited.

"I've promised Margaret Thomas," Eldred said at length, and the mother's smile faded, leaving only the love evident. The pleasant evening Effie and Elizabeth Wilkes had spent with them had—but who shall fathom the tortuous path of a mother's hopes and—fears?

* * * * *

Fraternal Hall was ablaze with the light of a multitudinous array of kerosene lamps bracketed on the walls. John Morris bustled importantly and Roger Wilkes made Collson sit down with little Nellie and his "rumaticks" for company, while he took Pete out the back door, a little by the neck and a great deal by the ear, much to

the alarm of the ladies. Then he had to finish the job by giving to Bobbie Burns MacDonald a silver half-dollar to keep the old hound out of the hall.

"Can't — I — take — him — back't — Uncle — Enoch's?" whined Bobbie, after he had made sure the silver was good by putting it in his mouth. Mary MacDonald had been that day too busy baking pies, buns, and bread for the "benefit" and her own brood of eight or nine to fasten with needle and thread that which Bobbie had destroyed with jack-knife and fishing-hook. And Bobbie Burns MacDonald was too canny to place a bran new silver half-dollar in such precarious jeopardy as that!

"Can't — I take — Pete — t'Uncle— E—noch's?" he gurgled again with a rising emphasis, and still hanging on to the hound's left ear.

Roger Wilkes, rotund and jolly, and beaming with good humor partly engendered by nature and still more by the animated scene indoors, which recalled many such times he and Jack Morris had had together with the former schoolma'ams on The Monongahela, smiled at boy and dog, sensing no doubt on the instant the conflicting desire of the lad. Bobbie wanted the money, also to see the dancing. Wilkes ran his fingers through his hair. He expressed his solution thus:

"No, my boy, it's no use doing that—they've just come from there. Mr. Collson locked 'em both in (evidently referring to the terrier, too) but he forgot to put panes in the back window and the hound there, or the ratter, pulled his pit-pants out of the hole."

It is not likely Bobbie Burns heard half of this discourse on shrewd doggishness. Apparently his mind had been running toward a solution of his own, for he blurted out as he pulled vigorously on the unwilling ears:

"I— know — where's — a — place — so — I — d-o-o-o;
our — coal — house — aint — got — no — winders —
it's — gotta _____. "

Whatever it had Roger Wilkes did not hear. Someone behind him called and he went in, leaving dog and boy to fight the matter out between themselves. But it could not have been much more intricate of negotiation than Collson's pit pants as substitute for broken panes, for fifteen minutes later Pete was again enjoying the dance from the rear door while Bobbie Burns was stuffing himself and a favorite companion or two with prodigious quantities of lemonade and sandwiches.

In the meantime affairs went noisily on in the hall. Donald MacDonald's fiddle and Micky Gawan's violoncello screamed out the prelude to "The Devil's Dream." The older matrons subsided into chairs placed beneath the reflectors on the walls, the maids and young matrons assented to or refused requests from the males to become their partners as is the way of young womanhood. Eldred Morris bowed to Margaret Thomas, and led that young lady from beside the man on crutches for whom the party was being held. Mr. Rummel led Miss Wilkes out onto the floor from a seat between her mother and Emmy Morris, and Tom took the now more tractable Esther for his partner, just as with all her crotchety love he preferred her for his sweetheart.

Thus the dance went merrily on amid a veritable babel of tongues, each sett-ending being the excuse for the young bucks to leave their ladies drinking lemonade while they quenched their thirst behind the hall from a large keg bought unlawfully at Maloney's retail house. Thus are the purposes of the best committees made void.

In the changing of partners Eldred Morris dropped out for a spell and watched the dancing from beside his mother and Mrs. Wilkes. Elizabeth, at Rummel's side, prepared for the first stage of a quadrille, and in getting into position just happened to look toward her mother and—smiled. The dark eyes of the young man, probably mistaking the smile for him, sent back an answer

accompanied by the doffing of his hat, which was followed instantly by the gaze of the blue eyes of Elizabeth dropping instantly to the floor with a reddening of her cheeks and a confused answer of the young man to a question of Mrs. Wilkes's.

"Salute yer pardner!" cried the Caller, and Miss Wilkes bowed to the perfectly-built and still more perfectly-attired young gentleman from Colville. At the interval she broke away with the exclamation: "My, but it's hot; I think I'll not dance again for a while."

She went over to the group beneath the reflector, while Rummel sought a partner in Esther. The next sett Miss Wilkes danced with Eldred Morris.

"I thought you'd forgotten your old friends," he ventured, standing beside her in the forming ring, straight as an unstormed hickory with the physical majesty of the oak.

Elizabeth crimsoned as she rather diffidently lifted his hand in her's, and let her eyes fall on the scar she had made when a little girl. The dance is conducive of unusual liberties.

"The shoe's on the other foot," she quibbled, as they moved to the music's rymth, gazing at the chiffon-clad Margaret passing them. Then, irrelevantly: "That Miss Thomas is quite beautiful, don't *you* think?" Eldred remained for a moment silent. "That light blue is set off so well with the pink around her waist." Yet her eyes were wavering from his to the clean-shaven face, the neat silk shirt with an appropriate tie, and clothing well made that fitted superbly, and his eyes met hers and they both smiled: she at being caught and he at her womanly naivete. Then his gaze took in the blue silk around her own waist, the pure white lawn and the real Cluny lace (which, however, might just as well have been Valenciennes for all the miner knew) the soft, full breasts still tumultuous from exertion, and the fine curving form

his arm had but now encircled, and the frank and truthful appraisement of Miss Margaret's charms he had tactlessly framed was modified, in the telling at least.

"Miss Thomas is a nice girl," he said simply, drawing in with his breath the fragrance of a bunch of tuberoses fastened on the bodice of Elizabeth's dress.

"We need a girl," she said, freezing with conscious dignity; "you might bring her up some night."

For a moment the young miner's face turned a deep scarlet, and his tongue itched with a retort in kind. But Elizabeth was young and—a woman, he thought, and he was all of three or four years older! The difference in environment had perhaps spoiled this only child of her parents? Mature Eldred! so wise at twenty-three!! Then she smiled and took his scarred hand in hers, swinging it back and forth as she moved lightly and lithely with him to a seat, and tartness gave way to tolerance. For the next few minutes she was very sweet and gracious, and neither alluded to Margaret, but she would not dance again for a while, she said.

The next half hour Morris spent among the men, taking now and then a drink of lemonade, for the hall was very warm and illy ventilated. Some of the youths who had traversed the back stairs too often grew boisterous, and as the night advanced Morris, with his father and the village peace-officer, our friend Collson, had their hands full. This settled, Eldred came on the floor with Esther, and followed in a waltz with Margaret. From beside Rummel Miss Wilkes glanced often upon the pair, on the man particularly, for he was indeed fair to female eyes. What words passed between him and the crippled miner's girl we may not know, but we can surmise by his taking at the end of the waltz a pocket-book from his hip pocket and, crumpled, slipping into Margaret's hand either coin or note. A minute later this lay in the in-

jured miner's pocket and on his tongue thanks and gratitude for an unusual gift.

When Morris sought Elizabeth next she coldly repulsed him. "I've promised Mr. Rummel for the balance of the night," said she. Then, with that perversity common to her age and sex she added: "But I see Miss Thomas isn't engaged."

Then, Eldred Morris having suddenly engendered a dryness of the throat, went down the back stairs this time to assuage it!

CHAPTER IV.

TICKETS RETURNED

Samuel Turley was an inveterate foe of union agitation. Also he was the foreman of *The Effie*. Because of this John Morris eventually moved from Carbonia to The River. His sons, being satisfied with their berths at the mine, and for other reasons we need not mention, remained. For similar reasons the two brothers preferred the plateau of our vicinity to the lowlands of The Monongahela. Summer and Winter passed with Tom at Mary MacDonald's, who, despite her own large brood, made room for him. Effie Wilkes, for old acquaintance sake did as much for the young mine official. Carbonia had no general boarding-house then; we have a fine caravansary now in addition to Calabrué's "hotel," whose boarders were then as now all of one nationality with the proprietor.

Miss Elizabeth Wilkes was seldom at home excepting at week ends, her Uncle Turley's being nearer Colville College. Thus matters stood when, after many months of persistent effort, Eldred Morris and Enoch Collson journeyed all the way from the difference in mine gases, both as to specific gravities and symbols, to the increasing of air volumes by splitting and other means. During this period the mail had bulged, almost, with solutions of technical problems, and the text-books had become dog-eared and black with repeated thumbing. Consequently Fireboss Morris made his second step. He was

Foreman Morris, now, if you please, and Turley was superintendent.

And here forevermore the old lampman was left behind with Pete and little Nellie. Yet no one in our village was less envious in thus dropping to the rear. But another friendship—it was hardly more than that at that time—was less satisfied to play second fiddle in Eldred Morris's life. Yet in this as in burning midnight-oil his persistence was pretty near boundless, and as it had thus far won out in more tangible affairs he held a private opinion that it would win out in this. Alas, Eldred, the whimsicalities of a fair maid are more subtle than marsh-gas and the whys and wherefores of her actions harder to discover than the species of crime known as "graft" going on sometimes under the noses of the best of men.

This self-confidence, and a firm belief in *The Effie's* future, led the new foreman to invest the greater part of his salary in a building and loan association to the end that ultimately—with a public reason altogether opposed to the real one—there was erected a nice five-roomed cottage on an eminence about half-way between Wilkes's and the blocks. Even the best of mining men must dissemble sometimes.

In this premise Eldred Morris was not averse to so doing, and, being entirely feminine, the much-loved Elizabeth sensed this positive feeling and set her mind to repel it with that heartlessness that only a woman can indulge in when the act of refusal wounds her as well as the man. The man, being by nature a coward in affairs of sentiment, would either avoid or compromise. The woman does neither, as we shall see.

* * * * *

It was morning and the sky was leaden, which augurs well for a fine evening in Summer. Morris's had moved back to the village, change of fortune having placated our official gods and change of climate nearly killed Emily

Morris. Unlike the valley of the Monongahela Carbonia has no night and morning fogs.

At Wilkes's, where the foreman still remained as yet, the white-capped Effie poured Eldred's coffee and her own. Elizabeth was still at her Aunt Marion's, although the term of college study was ended for that season.

"It's strange," said her mother across the dishes. "I can't understand why Elizabeth doesn't want to come home, I'm sure," with a questioning look at her boarder.

Perhaps Eldred Morris could have told her had not a piece of bread Mrs. Wilkes set to brown set itself out to get black. As it was he had a chance to resume his normal color while she worked among the bread's gray pungency. He rose as she turned. The subject had been prompted by a printed circular lying on the table.

"The play's the thing at college," said he, pulling on his coat, and quoting from something he had heard somewhere. Shakespeare Eldred Morris knew only by hearsay—then. Like many another miner-student will he soon learned that the marsh-gas of written romance will not mix with the mephitic air of a completed mining course in the gaining. "But I always fancied Colville students' plays lacked—lacked—oh, didn't make you feel as if the thing was real somehow. Did you ever see one there, Mrs. Wilkes?"

Effie Wilkes sat down again to her coffee. There was no mine with its constantly increasing force of men and responsibility waiting her finishing. She supped deliberately, looking straight into Eldred's eyes when she could catch them.

"I never did; but Elizabeth likes them and thinks they're fine," she replied with a great deal of suggestion in the last part of her sentence. "And the students who live there haven't much to do now school's out."

"Well," asquiesced the big miner, half heartedly, "I suppose the students do see beauties in them that we

fellows would miss. And," he continued, taking with diffidence from his evening coat a leather wallet, "it's no more than right they should. I'll bet if James T. Beard could read off stage the dullest page that *don't* enliven the old *Colliery Engineer* I'd shout myself hoarse with applause."

"I suppose you would," echoed Mrs. Wilkes, smiling quaintly at the broad shoulders moving toward the door, her cup poised, elbow resting on the table linen. "The alma-mater always has a warm spot in the student's heart," no doubt recalling her own.

"Well, mine, Mrs. Wilkes," returned the young man, standing for a moment with his hand on the door-frame, "would be rather a peculiar foster-mother; it would certainly be more appropriate to call it 'foster-uncles,'" leaving her to ponder over his allusion to Collson and Uncle Samuel's Mail.

That morning he purchased by proxy two reserved seats for the play, regardless, and gave the lad a second quarter to take one with a note to Mrs. Turley's for Elizabeth. He wrote in it no word as to why he did not take it himself. The woman for whom it was intended did. The boy returned with an addition to what Morris sent. A few lines scrawled on the bottom of his own note conveyed a terse regret. She had promised Mr. Rummel only that morning and of course couldn't break her promise.

The note and envelope Morris tore to bits and started on the tickets, but, thinking better of it, decided on another use for them. He'd give them to someone—if he could—or get the refund. He was saved the latter. Tom was in town when he went down that night, standing patiently at the window of a dry-goods shop. Morris needed nothing more to tell him why the boy was there. And, seeing Esther coming out, he thrust the tickets into

his brother's hand and started off to escape questions. Tom followed him, calling on him to stop.

"We're moved an' fixed up and mother's gettin' up a party to warm the new house she said," at which rather muddled explanation both men smiled. "She an' dad said you was to be sure an' come—she knows you can't quit Wilkes's very well until the month's out—but you can bring Lizzie, as mother's invited her special."

Steps passed and repassed the two men. Both stood facing the then dirt-road of Colville's business-center, their feet on the pavement curb, eyes staring vacantly at the middle of the road. Both had problems peculiarly their own yet very much alike.

"Shall you?" queried the younger, remarking with wondering surprise his brother's unusual reticence and apparent reluctance to discuss the matter.

"I don't know," came the short reply; "it'll all depend."

"'Depend; on what?'" persisted the innocent. The more sophisticated brother was saved the chagrin of a deliberate falsehood or the almost as repugnant truth. A remarkably pretty black-eyed girl with pleasing familiarity reached her work-calloused fingers up to the big man's eyes by standing on tip-toes behind him.

"Who is it?" she asked, her voice slightly tremulous with suppressed excitement, expecting him to do exactly as he did, take her hands down gently and, turning, hold them, smiling back into the sparkling eyes.

"Esther!" he said, "I didn't hear you." Then: "Mother's work must be agreeing with you: you're looking well."

"Do you think so?" replied the girl, turning her crimsoning confirmation sideways to the miner because she had thought a profile view seen in the mirror of the shop she had just left made her just the weest bit better looking than standing straight front. And in the avoidance of his eyes there was a suggestion of diffidence strong

as her dominance over Tom. Knowing these facts and the terrible ending, I sometimes wonder if Eldred Morris had—but then what is to be One need not necessarily be a fatalist to believe that some things in this life are preordained.

“You’ll be at mother’s party?” Eldred continued.

“Catch me missing it!” the vivacious Esther stepped a brief imitation “clog” upon the pavement stones, her color rising and her dress upheld the teeniest bit above ankles touched by soft kid shoe-tops. Her eyes caught Eldred’s and dropped in deep bashfulness instantly, yet in his own there was nothing but smiling amusement. The younger brother’s gaze was riveted on a passing team, his mind on Esther and hers on him. Something unspoken had passed between them before Morris came on the scene. The elder brother sensed this when the girl, with a side glance at Tom and her eyes smiling rougishly, said: “Count me in where’s lots of fellers every time,” to which Eldred, who enjoyed discomfiture in others, sometimes, if harmless, as much as Esther, added:

“That’s right,” giving an assumed approval to the girl’s intentions by placing a hand on her shoulder, “have a good time while you can, before you both get old and full of troubles like me——.”

Esther’s sudden outburst of rippling laughter broke the suggestive sentence, and setting Morris off his guard brought from him something more direct than he had intended to say. Tom said nothing but still stared into the distance.

“You are gettin’ a little gray since you’re bossin’,” Esther smilingly retorted, and the foreman agreed that it was so, of course, falling into the young woman’s humor.

“I found a couple of real gray ones this morning, but as I pulled them out the girls won’t be any the wiser.”

To Tom he said: "Tell mother to invite Margaret and lots of the girls for sure; I want to get acquainted before they're all picked out. There's nothing like variety to keep up interest in life and—love, as Esther says."

The last sentence came with such sudden gravity, however, that the younger people placed on the words full value, and wondered who the lucky miner's daughter would be, and what had happened to cool entirely the half-earnest courtship between the foreman and Miss Wilkes. It brought speech to Tom's lips. Quite seriously he suggested:

"Then you ought to have been at Collson's Grove the other night," with a sidelong and gloomy glance at the girl beside him, "you'd seen—."

Tom Morris's description of what had happened at the grove suddenly ceased when the roses in Esther's cheeks faded to an intense white. Her back turned to the brothers and, head tilted, she started off down the street. Evidently this subject had been discussed before.

"Esther!" called the already repentant youth moving quickly past Eldred, "Esther, I won't," his voice sinking but intensely pleading.

The scene was so soon started and finished that Morris had hardly time to catalogue his semi-mortification and surprise at what seemed to him as unmanliness on his brother's part when both young people resumed their almost normal appearance and former places beside him. It had little significance in his estimation: a bit of flirtation or some trivial escapade with the town boys who frequented Carbonia's open-air dances. Eldred forbore to question either regarding it, and the conversation turned again to the housewarming at Mrs. Morris's and the chances of conquest among the prettier village girls.

"I haven't had a chance to see many of them lately, Esther, except you and Margaret," the big flatterer persisted in his oblique course regarding love, "except those

who don't seem to care for my attentions toward them," from which the reader will perhaps form a more accurate hypothesis than did Tom.

The pertinence of the remark wasn't lost on his sweetheart, however.

"They say there's as good fish in the sea as was ever catched," Esther modified the foreman's temporary anguish, to which Eldred agreed with a smile and a long glance at the soft rounded curves snuggling so neatly to clinging lawn white as drifting snow. At that moment Eldred Morris envied his brother Tom.

CHAPTER V. THE MINER AND THE MAID

John Morris poked his head into the kitchen of the new home where Mary MacDonald, Emily Morris and Esther were putting the preliminary touches to a lunch that was to be served as part of the festivities.

"Ain't you wimmen pretty near done?" he asked, standing on the floor of the larger living-room which was bared of carpet and furniture for the occasion. The "kitchen dances" of Carbonia were generally as harmless as they were frequent; as morally innocuous as the dances in the woods were immorally virulent. Home festivities which included the young folks were rarely considered eclat without this adjunct. Here the patrons were chosen and few; at the grove they were indiscriminate and many. "The folks'll soon be here, Emmy; here's Pete, now." The old hound lifted his nose to the miner approvingly. "Collson's comin' with MacDonald down the blocks." Then, receiving no reply: "Ain't you about tired out already?"

Evidently this was intended for Mrs. Morris. She sank to a chair with a tired sigh that belied the smile in her eyes. She answered:

"I am, John Morris, but I'm happy, too. This will be the first time for a good many months my boys have both been with their mother, and, oh, here's my Eldred and Tom now—" (when Emily Morris was pleased Eldred and Tom were her boys; when vexed she referred to them as "chips off the old block for stubbornness and

everything else that's bad," in which she differed not a great deal from many another good woman)—"and," reaching out her hand, "welcome, Elizabeth, dear, and Margaret—Esther, get a chair for your Uncle Collson, child—no, Mr. Rummel's young, he can stand."

A slight acidity accompanied the latter, but immediately sweetened in the eyes of the Colville youth. The polished, courteous manners—particularly when addressing our elder women—needed not the immaculate beauty of raiment always characteristic of this heir of the banker. The roguish blue eyes needed not the fragrant bouquet upon the lapel of the coat beneath them to create a favorable impression on the ladies, at least, nor the accurately-laid and faintly-perfumed hair the adjuncts of artistic ensemble in the mauve silk tie lying, lone diamond studded, upon a perfectly laundered and perfectly white background; neither silk-clad ankles and patent-leather pumps to show that here was indeed the finished product of a social environment in such wise as our boys might never hope—nor wish—to attain to. Yet Emily Morris gave him not a chair but let him stand, which he did not seem to mind, while she sat down beside Collson and Eldred and Pete. The subject turned on the latter, Eldred saying aside to the lampman:

"I notice he's not perfumed tonight."

Rummel, not hearing the name mistook the meaning. He turned pale, then scarlet, but with quick control of his emotions went on with what he was saying to Miss Wilkes regarding a play they had attended. Uncle Collson stroked one of the long ears rubbing his knee.

"No," said he, "he's got over that but he still won't do as I tells him. I locked the door that night of the hall doin's an' warned him sollem as he must stay in wi' Nellie."

"He didn't?"

Collson looked down into the big eyes unwinkingly

looking up into his own. "Not he; an' he knowed as he didn't intend to when I left neither, for a few minutes after I got in he was there, too."

"Got through the keyhole?" the foreman laughed gently, and Emily Morris, who was talking with Mary MacDonald, yet listening to her son, admonished gently: "Now——Eldred."

"The kayhole?" Collson was quite seriously surprised. "Not he; but he came through them winder-stoppin's at the back by pullin' 'em out. I shouldn't wonder if he learns to shift putty if I puts panes in instead of my pit-pants. He's a wise dog, that un."

"You're a smart old dog, Peter: a pretty wise old hound," Eldred stroked the head lifted up to him as he got up at the sound of the fiddle.

"He's a skunk-huntin'-ragskallamuffin, that's what he is," the old miner embellished the foreman's description, as the lampman hobbled over to the other side of the room where he and Pete would be out of the way. And this he repeated again in a slightly more bitter tone as he looked hard at the youth speaking jovially but quietly to Miss Wilkes, and, probably, unintentionally ignoring their greeting bows.

The lower rooms were full of grown-ups, mostly American and British. The beds upstairs had quite a full quota of firstborns of both sexes. Outside a small crowd of the same nationalities gathered. Calabrué's men rarely took active interest in the pleasures of their English-speaking contemporaries, although one of them had drifted in that night from the big red boarding-house in the fields beyond *The Effie*. These sons of Italy had their own frolics, Saint Days and "Big Sundays." Even in Carbonia the lines of caste are strictly drawn, sometimes.

The fiddles tuned up. Eldred Morris's place alone wasn't filled. Even as the dancers waited so had a man

dark-visaged and earnest who had watched for the foreman's exit for an hour.

"‘A place?’” the young man repeated soothingly as to a child; “a new place, Toni, tonight—no . . . This isn’t the place to ask for a new room, you chump,” and brushing past him in answer to someone in the doorway calling him Eldred Morris turned to add: “To-morrow; yes, I’ll see you to-morrow, or someone else will,” he finished under his breath, and wondering at the man’s intensity obvious in every word and gesture, and at the wild stare attributed at first to liquor.

Later that wonder grew, mingled not a little with apprehension regarding the Italian’s design. For each time Eldred Morris’s form passed the doorway that night, until the last hour or so before the foreman was called to the mine, Pietrecco followed him but did not speak. Alleviation came only in the fact that since he had taken active charge of the big mine surprises were becoming commonplace: the unexpected the rule. Thus the night went on and the dance, while a man with bowed head wandered, strangely agitated, along that path which goes past *The Effie* to Calabrué’s, and no other unpleasant incident occurred.

So that what between eating and drinking and dancing the collars of the gentlemen generally did not crumple, for there were but two there containing starch, but the ladies’ waists did begin to go askew near the belt-line in that direction taken when one “Swings yer Pardner!” The young women and young men were quite evenly apportioned, and the dance not being public each danced with each in turn. The second time Eldred Morris joined hands “to cirkirlate” with Miss Wilkes to the tune of “Oh Dear Mamma What A Cold I’ve Got,” what with the near touch of her soft flesh, the thrill of his arm around her waist, her heaving bosom so near his own filling his nostrils with the fragrance of several flowers upon her

breast and a single rose in her hair, he forgot all his pique. They grew quite confidentially familiar, and he suggested at the end that they go out.

So they went out, and he put his hand over hers shyly as they went upward toward a knoll, and she allowed it to remain thus. Then it stole round her waist and she made no resistance. The voices and the lights were near. Moreover she was not afraid of him—not in the least. They stopped, and he said tentatively:

“You’re going home tonight?”

She murmured affirmatively.

“With me?” he persisted, having gained confidence this night while he had held her close to himself and his breath stirred the loose strands of hair on her white neck.

“I might,” she replied. Then, following a moment’s thought: “Yes, I suppose.”

He still clung to the way of the village sweethearts. “To take home” meant an hour or two in the parlor—alone with HER. And his voice was vibrant with chagrin when he told her his desire. Anticipation and the touch of her body soft and sweet and clean enwrapping him with its own odor made him foolish. Calling a curse on his ill-luck he explained after apology.

“When it isn’t you or Rummel it’s the mine,” he said, already grieved at his outburst. “I’ve got to go—right now—and you’ll dance again with——.”

“Tom, or MacDonald, or Margaret’s beau—Farley, isn’t it?” she reassured him with words and laughter and made him glad. Through the dark she looked at him questioningly, and he understood and explained:

“Turley is at the mine; has been all evening in my place.” Turley had been young himself; also he liked his subordinate and had a secret aspiration to one day call him nephew as Elizabeth’s husband. “He sent this,” striking a match for her eyes to see, “before the last

dance." A gust of wind blew the paper away.

"And still you waited?" They had turned at the top of the hill and walked slowly toward the house.

"I'd have taken a discharge and went to work with the men again," he told her earnestly, "rather than miss that dance," which gratified something in Elizabeth Wilkes perhaps you, fair reader, can explain, because she had never heard Eldred Morris say anything with worse grammar since he had been trying to master it as well as mining, nor with the same deliberation he had said that unless he meant it with all his heart. Also it led her womanly intuition to anticipate what did in fact materialize a moment later, and which she wanted and did not want to hear. He tried to kiss her, but she moved quickly from him, trembling, fearing herself more than him, wondering why the nettles she had deliberately planted bloomed as roses having the full fragrance of love.

"Eldred," she urged, "the folks will miss us; let us go. And the mine?"

"The folks will wait," he retorted, wondering in himself how before a dance, the dance, after the dance, could make so vast a difference in liberties granted and taken. He wondered why a man could do that during the exaltation sequent on motion and music which in Carbonia at other times might mean death, or at least a thrashing. He wondered when he saw her avoid him when he attempted to put forth his hand to embrace her body why she had allowed the same thing in public, and, at that moment to Eldred Morris the conventions seemed a weak excuse. It flashed across his mind that it seemed incongruous for John Smith to encircle Mrs. Brown's waist one night, and hold her as close to him as Brown himself would do—the closer the better—and yet for poor John to "get his block knocked off" (if nothing worse happened) for doing the same thing the next day. And substituting the armorous John Smith for Eldred

Morris, and Mrs. Brown for Elizabeth Wilkes, how was a man to tell under such fluctuating conditions when his love was reciprocated and when it was not? When the love of a man's soul allows other gentlemen such as Amos Rummel and Donald MacDonald—being the dancing extremities of married and single life in this case—to do with her waist as John Smith did to Mrs. Brown's while he sat talking with Emily Morris and Esther, how was he to know unless he asked?

"The folks will wait, and the mine will keep," he retorted truculently; "what I have to say won't." He bit the end off sharply as he would a cigar that proved obdurate to his teeth, and she feathered the rough edges he had torn in the atmosphere by rippling laughter.

"Yes it will, you silly boy," again stepping away from him when he attempted to draw her to him. "I'll—I'll put salt on it," her voice echoing its silvery peals in the copse beside the path.

Eldred Morris of the mine wasn't the same gentleman Elizabeth Wilkes was here leading a beggar's dance, and we may assume that his own voice sounded foreign to him when he said that she might do whatever she liked, or say she didn't care for him, but he knew better.

"But I shan't say that," she promptly responded in assurance, "as I'm the teacher of boys and girls in the Episcopalian Sunday School, and it wouldn't be a good example if my scholars knew I had told a lie . . . now would it?"

"Then you do love me, Elizabeth?" his voice insistent: hers tormenting.

"I didn't say that."

"Well, do," he persisted, and she told him again she was a teacher of children and must be careful of her words. "You wouldn't want me to please you with a fib, Mr. Morris?" she assumed a mock frigidity. "Not tonight anyway. I might have to dance with Mr. Rum-

mel when MacDonald can't get someone to take his place with the fiddle, or perhaps go home with one of them . . . You wouldn't want a girl who loved you to do that?"

"If it couldn't be helped," he agreed, willing to go half way.

"But it could," she continued to quibble and torment. "I could stay with your mother or Mrs. MacDonald or Esther."

"Well do that," he urged, taking her seriously, "and tell me do you—do you—what about Rummel? Don't you know, Elizabeth, that he is——."

His companion cut him short. "Mr. Morris," she said, "that isn't fair; because I've locked the front door you are trying to get in at the back. I've half a mind to say sneak in. I thought you were—were better than that."

She walked farther away from him; he begged her pardon and adroitly put the same question another way.

"Well, what of me, then? This thing can't go on this way. I've a home, and——."

"Why not?" she interrupted, now in an earnest mood herself. "I'm sure I haven't shown any sign that it's disagreeable to me—not tonight, anyhow," she modified, the dark hiding the surge of color to her cheeks and neck. "I do like to have you with me—sometimes—and care for you and your interests a great deal, Eldred. But why do you urge anything more? We are both young and you are getting along so well at the mine, and I have a long time to go to school yet, besides—there are other matters you don't understand . . . Mr. Rummel's——."

"Why?" he stopped her harshly; "why? You let me go with you long enough to set the grass on fire then you ask why it burns?"

"Well I'm sorry," she laughed gently at his way of putting it, "and salt won't be of any—I mean I'll have to

put water on it if—oh! if you persist in—oh, Mr. Morris, let us go nearer the house, please do," Elizabeth stammered, pleaded, moving near enough to him to clutch desperately at his arm, and listening to the sound of heavy footfalls coming toward her in the dark.

It came very near and suddenly coughed a hoarse, rank, horribly loud cough, and the girl snuggled close to the man in sheer fright. Taking advantage he caught and held her despite her struggles, his hand near her heaving breast and agitated heart, and the little zephyrs of her warm breath fanned his face as he kissed her, "setting the grass on fire" in earnest. Then he laughingly told her the awful noise nearby was only one of her papa's sick mules up to get well with a change of air and food.

Then she was vexed indeed, and placed a greater distance between him and herself than formerly.

As they neared the house she spoke of the accident, for she was withal a Wilkes. "It mightn't be much," he said, "but it's in a bad place: the fan. It'll fill a good many free places with gas if it stands long."

"Then I must wish you good night," she urged, which he postponed by saying he almost wished—just then—he wasn't bossing, wistfully looking at the fair face now visible in the light. "It's harder work than is generally supposed—mentally and otherwise—and a man can never call a minute his own. It's a good bit of a buffer's job, too, for if a man does his duty to his employer the men's enmity is his for a certainty; if he pleases the operator last and the men first he has to go. If a man——."

"Oh, Mr. Morris," Elizabeth Wilkes pleaded in interrupting, "don't say that. I'm sure papa is—that is if—if you—if I dared repeat what papa and Uncle Turley say," she stammered, "you would think differently; you'd know your efforts were appreciated indeed."

"Well I'm glad of that," Morris exclaimed without effort to disguise the fact that the girl's suggestion had

filled an emptiness. "I guess I'm not different from the majority of men in that I'm glad to know that my best efforts to do the square thing by both parties are reciprocated. And like me they'd hardly know if someone didn't tell 'em. Anyhow I shall have more heart in my work for awhile," he told her, then, bending close to her ear he whispered:

"But there's another thing that would——."

With her hand pressed against his lips Elizabeth crushed back what he would have said. "Not tonight," she told him soothingly. "Tomorrow, if the mine works I'll let you say it," and turned at the sound of a footstep to find Mary MacDonald beside her. She called:

"Where's that Eldred Morris?" looking into the dark where Eldred stood, her eyes still blinded by the recent light.

"Here, playing hooky, Mary," he laughed.

"Your father asked me to come out an' find you. Mr. Turley's sent twice for you," she said, "and the last time for Donald and Strafford as well. He had all the day men out of the blocks before."

By this time all the red was gone from the foreman's face. The accident must have been more serious than he thought. He was restlessly eager now, and spoke to no one while he stripped and hurriedly donned some of John Morris's working clothes. He had scarcely finished when the noise of dancing feet was smothered by the sound of the big mine-whistle.

Before he had gone far it started again, breaking the heavy stillness lying over the unpeopled fields with a roar that spoke words of portent to the hurrying man. Then again it blew, and still again, and, having sent its message blew no more.

* * * * *

Toward dawn it became evident to Eldred Morris that if the mine was to run that day more help must be pro-

cured. Most of the men working were tired out. The nearest available were at Calabrué's, and the most willing, too, for heavy labor. Standing still the great blades would leave the workings in an ultra-sensitive and dangerous state. Nor would it be for that day alone. Inflammable gas would rise into many places Morris had, by almost super-human effort since he had been foreman, freed of its dangerous prescence. Insidiously it would creep out of gaseous rooms and headings and snuggle up in open areas made by acres of fallen strata. Almost every rib-cave in the mine would be full of it, particularly in that section over which Strafford was fireboss.

To avoid this danger Morris spared neither himself nor his men. Like a bull he bellowed commands through the dinning noise to the men flagging in the distance, yet smoothly and quietly insistent when he could be heard so. With unseemly haste lights flickered above the vertical chasm, yet progress was slow, tormentingly so to that man of all there who fully realized its significance. An accident purposed or lacking intent at that time might mean much more to Wilkes and his family than a small fire sometime before, even if confined to one section. At four in the morning Eldred spoke to one of the men:

"Go to Calabrué's," said he, "for Toni Pietrecco, Big Dominic (so called because of extreme shortness) and Rossi, and tell Calabrué to send their buckets on later. They're the nearest and the most apt to come," he added aside to MacDonald.

The man nodded and swung into a path crossing the field in which the fan-shaft had been sunk. At one end of that particular ribbon of ungrassed soil was *The Effie*'s hoisting shaft, at the other a square barn-like structure painted red but looking black in the gray dawn. Toward this building the miner was heading.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNDERGROUND DRAMA

Act One: The Crime

When Foreman Morris sent to Calabrule's boarding house not all of Calabrule's lodgers were asleep. According to the ethics of slumber in the mining camp they should have been, just then, to a man so soundly slumbering that nothing short of a stick of dynamite exploded beneath each bunk would have awakened its occupant. One of them at least had passed a restless night rolling and tossing on his hard bed, occasionally groaning as a man in physical pain.

During the night the uneasy sleeper's subconscious misery had distressed his bed-buddy, for at Calabrule's the beds, even as their occupants, frequently carried double burden until they knew better. Yet strange as it may seem it was not only the mine foreman's refusal to place this burden on Antonio Pietrecco at Emmy Morris's party that was responsible for the miner's unrest. Many other links had been forged, and more subtle the blows, previous to the dance in the new house.

Pietrecco had for sometime been a lodger at Calabrule's before his mental state became unduly agitated. With the knowledge that certain of his countrymen had found at the foot of *The Effie's* rainbow the pot of gold he craved came pain, as it so often does. The previous quiescence can best be explained, perhaps, by adducing the fact that Pietrecco was a good Catholic as our miners go. It was through his frequenting the little Colville church with the

Cross, more than that other institution of our vicinity the sign of which was tin and a frothy beer mug depicted in uncertain art, that Antonio had not hitherto caught the drift of the undercurrent which eventually proved his undoing. Purposely this topic was discussed chiefly at Maloney's, and rarely before the bar even there.

At Calabrule's table who had a good place in the mine, whose wife and bambinos had left Italy and would arrive in Carbonia soon, who was returning to his native hills to toil no more in The Land Of Opportunity, all these were discussed freely and openly and were to Pietrecco as the Prayer To His Patron Saint, or the order of service specified in The Missal. He could speak up with any of them, and on most subjects out-argue even Rossi The Loud-Mouthed, despite his raucous voice and foul language, and could talk and gesture one of the several Dominics, nick-named The Squeaker, to a standstill in ten minutes. The idiosyncrasies of mining nomenclature sometimes—as in these two cases—struck a line analogous with characteristics. Calabrule's boarders bore names of such mystifying similarity that Carbonia untangled to suit its own contrariant humors.

But of late Pietrecco had caught a suggestion fleeting as the Summer wind, and toward which his attitude can best be described as that of a babe to The Law. By and by other signs became manifest, one of the chiefest a decided increase in his little cousin's pay, while Antonio's was at a standstill, or worse. For the foreman, when he had by clever manipulation of the resources placed at his command opened for occupancy a great many places, had too tender a spirit to resist the clamorous, long-idle, men who came at that period of industrial depression from God-knows-where. Also the superintendent, possibly at the instigation of Wilkes, had ordered that married men particularly should be favored. The foreman, as well as the miner, is an employee, and must carry on his own

shoulders and heavy in his own heart, quite often, injustice not his own. The "company store" fathered many a wrong in our village in those days.

For months Pietrecco had barely made his board let alone enable him to remit to his loved ones in the distant land. Clamorous letters therefrom, and the astonishing difference in Dominic's pay, had driven the miner to desperation bordering on insanity. And so matters stood when one morning at Calabreue's table the news was disseminated that "Big" Dominic's family was due to reach Colville that day. The news turned Toni an ashen gray with impotent rage and superstition. He had heard of men becoming desperate enough to sell themselves to a certain cloven-hoofed gentleman for a consideration in coin. Could it be that . . . At this point Toni's self-interrogation ended abruptly. Some things were apparently too fearsome to be given thought. He crossed himself vigorously, and barely spoke to Dominic as he passed him that morning.

During that day, however, the element of superstition was removed with the possibility of Dominic's family reaching the village for sometime. Arrival at Carbonia was delayed. The latter came as news from the steamship agent, the former from a miner who, besides being a countryman of Pietrecco's, had in better times worked in that part of the mine where Dominic and several others had found the rainbow's foot. He explained to Toni how the need of that part going forward as fast as possible gave to those employed there many cars while other sections had few. Also incidentally came a hint from Calabreue, but the latter, having never been a miner, could give but a generic idea. But these several openings gave to Pietrecco the clue to further operations looking toward ultimate success. His first move had failed the night of Emmy Morris's party, preceding which Dominic's heart leaped and his tongue wagged at the station

when his tongue was not outdone by the woman's beside him.

On the way to the village he told her of extensive preparations made for her coming, and that he had "invited Rossi and Calabruce and Pietrecco and——."

The dusky matron interrupted: "'Pietrecco,' my sister's husband?"

"The same," answered her spouse, touching which information an embarrassing silence fell between the two for the space of ten seconds. This gave Dominic the opportunity to petulantly order the troop of miniature replicas of himself and his Maria to keep closer to his heels and to cease gaping at each house in turn.

"Yours is so—alike as two grapes—four rooms, yes," he replied to a question from his wife, "and painted"

Followed another pause in which the woman's eyes traversed the bent the younger members of the family had been forbidden. In spasmodic jerks she remarked many things strange to her, among them a nickle-trimmed range seen through an open door, and her face beamed at her lord's reply:

"A stove——" proudly, "but new my Maria: shiny like silver. Mucha cost? Yes, twenty-five dollar: one hundred twenty-five lira!" Dominic spoke in their native tongue, interspersed freely with mongrel English to impress his mate. The woman was pleased—surprised. Her man was rich—assuredly so, and clever! How *did* he speak that strange language? America had done wonders for her Dominic, and——.

"Pietrecco?" his wife turned with an odd look her husband did not relish. "His family is still at Calvara-on-the-hill and you—you came together"

Dominic was more ingenious in invention than ingenuous in language. He found refuge in evasion. . . .

"Antonio not good worker in this—the safety light—it hurt his eyes—it bad."

Not fully understanding such strange terms the woman looked her doubt. She had known Pietrecco as a good workman, strong, industrious, a churchman: having every good qualification her Dominic had not. Could it be the seacrossing had made—but, being a woman she was poor at accepting theories. To her practical mind, as is common to her people and class, the way to judge of a thing was by its results, and she balanced her husband's case on this scale. She found the net result concrete and to her pleasing: decidedly so. Toni and the distant sister were swallowed in the first exultation of the new home, and if she thought of the matter again occasionally it was to pity her sister's choice and grow prouder of her own acumen. Maria lent her every energy to the preparation attendant on the big time which was to inaugurate the family's coming into the new land of glorious opportunity!

* * * * *

Of all who came Pietrecco alone showed outward envy of the family's coming. His wife had sent trivial tokens of love to him by the hands of her sister, which added to the miner's anguish. He drank his beer sullenly, refusing obdurately to mix with it the plenteous wine. He ate chestnuts previously boiled, and helped out the repast with large quantities of chicken cooked in olive oil. He grunted a few words of welcome and asked many questions regarding the wife and children in the far-away village. And while the crowd talked itself hoarse and drank itself maudlin Pietrecco shrewdly listened and remained sober. He had heard somewhere that a drunken tongue quite often lays bare a sober thought. It did.

Insofar as Pietrecco was concerned the boiled chestnuts and beer served so liberally at Dominic's had little to do with the restless night that followed. At the

moment Morris started the man toward Calabrué's for help Antonio was bending beside his trunk. Quietly opening it he extracted therefrom all he had been able to save toward doing what Dominic had done. And, holding it near the light, he looked at it long, and an unutterable feeling almost choked him.

"Perhaps after all," he hesitated, "the boss might not be—or the drink? Dominic's a boaster anyway . . . perhaps——."

Here Toni got confused in his hypothesis. A step sounded along the rough aisle dividing the bedrooms on one side from those on the other, and he abstractedly put the money back. Then he listened. It was only Calabrué's "woman" going down to get breakfast. Then came the voice at the stair-foot:

"Rossi! Pietrecco! Bigga Domineek!"

Going down they told the messenger: "Dominic's at his own house but he come—sure."

The messenger went for Dominic, while Calabrué's "woman" told the others: "Morris sends for you to the shaft—quick."

They slipped into their working clothes and went out into the dawn, with Pietrecco's savings in his pocket.

The mine did not run generally that day. An important piece of machinery broke and necessitated a duplicate being forged at the shop. But at the earliest moment fresh air went sweeping through Strafford's section. MacDonald and Rossi had both gone home suffering minor injuries received during the work, and Strafford had gone in to examine for gas preparatory for the entrymen to follow and get coal ready. These "free turn" men followed the fireboss at a safe distance, among them Dominic, although he had worked since dawn. Times were hard and a good place not readily to be forfeited.

"I'll go to the office for an anemometer and Davy,

now, I guess," Morris told Turley, "and slip over for my own clothes and a snack while I'm at it," by which the reader will assume that Eldred Morris didn't tell all his desires even to the girl's uncle, no more than you did to yours. "I want to look at some work in the old section before we start again." Then, to Pietrecco: "You pretty handy with a saw, Toni?"

Antonio nodded and smiled effusively. The early morning's work had in his simple estimation placed him in considerable familiarity with the foreman. Hands and bodies together they had lifted and strained and—cursed.

"Well, get a saw and hatchet and some nails from the shop and wait at the shaft until I come back. I've a bit of work in yonder that you can do to make a shift."

When Morris ultimately returned to the mine the sun stood well over the hills beyond Colville, flooding the intervening valley with light. In the clumps of trees beyond the car tracks birds twittered and sang their morning hymns to the sun god. Morris munched the last of a piece he had stuffed in his pocket as he passed the engine-rooms, and breathed deep of the vernal fragrance strong in the morning even in the mine-yard when the wind stood in the right quarter. And his spirits rose higher as the sun.

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNDERGROUND DRAMA

Act Two: An Unfortunate Accessory

The completion of an ugly job whisked away the slight ill-temper characterizing the foreman's orders to his men during the earlier night. He spoke to Engineer Darrel at the shaft-top in a cheerful manner as the latter went to his levers to let him down. The cage hit the bottom with a thud, water, always collected there, flying out into both roadways. Here for a moment foreman and miner stood, for a momentary blindness follows the descent from the surface light. The safety light approximates total darkness after the sudden transition from the sun. Then, stumbling at first, they went forward with a slow but steady swing. The grave-quiet of the underground was disturbed only by the sough of their feet and an occasional scurrying of rats who in great numbers fattened therein.

Almost directly underneath the path Pietrecco had traversed at dawn from Calabrué's the eight-foot mine road wound its dark way four hundred feet below the surface, the two men like ants crawling in their own tunnelings. Very infrequently Morris passed back to the man following some inconsequential remark to which the miner replied almost inaudibly. His mind was concerned with weighty things.

Thus, mostly in silence, the Calabrian trailed the marks left in the exceedingly fine car-powdered coal-dust, filling in many places the center of the roadway to a depth

of several inches. The district had not yet wet it, so to speak, with the tears of widows' and orphans' agony. Following no general custom such as exists today Morris later had this removed from the miles of headings opened in *The Effie*, deeming it safer where the surface rains and snow could fall on it than there, where, in a pulverized, deadly, state, an otherwise insignificant gas explosion might lift and burn it and destroy or wreck everything in its path.

They came at length to a junction. Morris stopped and the miner sank heavily with a sigh to a tool-box kept there for the roadmen. Far in the distance to the right a number of tiny lights flickered like fireflies viewed from the small end of a telescope. Both men remained silent while the foreman turned his lamp-flame up slightly, then, looking vaguely into the semi-dark above the light's circle, he suggested:

"Toni had too much 'red-eye' at Dominic's last night?" attributing the apparent tiredness and silence to the wrong cause. Pietrecco nodded, then:

"Too mucha beer no good—yes," quickly, "too mucha beer good, sometime."

This came with a poor attempt to force a smile. Toni's fingers were touching the paper money in his pocket. Bringing it partly out he dropped it back. What if Morris should not be, after all, the particular guide fortunate Dominic had chosen to conduct him to the pot of gold at the carbon rainbow's base? All the wine had not been sufficiently potent to crowd caution sufficient to "peach" names. The road only had been incautiously made known. And Morris very rarely now exerted his privilege of granting places, although his word was the more final for its infrequency. Pietrecco knew this, and would ever opportunity be better than that before him? Hardly. But if he made a mistake . . . Poor Toni shivered. That might mean if not discharge at least the

contempt of the best of *The Effie's* officials from the miners' point of view. Eldred had been "a gooda boy—kinda boy—smila atta me, sometime," and, unlike Strafford, would not call him bad names when he did not understand.

Morris went inward toward the visible lights. The noise of labor was faintly audible. He stopped at an opening on the left and went in, removing a board which stood at the entrance. The coal vein here was high, which meant money to the miner if cars were available, the floor was dry, which meant comfort either way. Dog-like, Pietrecco still followed, but remained at a respectful distance when ordered, his eyes measuring with desire the natural excellencies of the place.

When Morris returned he replaced the board which had written on it in large letters: DANGER: KEEP OUT. This meant the miners. They retraced their steps to the junction, and Toni's heart sank as he passed on, still undecided, into the blackness. They came to the section where he worked. The pot of gold lay where they had recently left. Alternately hoping and fearing Pietrecco came almost without another word having passed between him and his superior to another point from which the two roads diverged, and having a projecting point like a letter V. Here again they stopped, and, setting his safety-light on a miner's tool-box nestling against the black side, Morris held in the heading's center the anemometer.

The miner's eyes watched the rapidly whirling blades of the little instrument, but there was in them no wonder anent the mysterious click of the watch-like movement. He waited patiently for it to end while in the silence the foreman made memorandum of the place "taken" and the quantity of cubic feet of air passing. Then Antonio touched respectfully the box on which The Great One

had seated himself, the pallor of his face not showing in the dark shadows.

"This my tools—my box—Meester Morris," he started, and stopped, undecided still.

The foreman looked at him with a blank stare. He was thinking of something far removed from the tools of Pietrecco, and the fact that they stood at that particular corner at that particular time was of small moment. The official's thoughts had shifted to the lover's with the speed of lightning: from barometers, anemometers and the water-gauge to a path fringed with hazel bushes and a rising knoll: from a young man's having more or less control of many not particular men to the same gentleman desiring control over one particular young woman. Forsooth The Underground carried waves of thought more interesting and vital than poor Pietrecco's tools. The miner tried again.

"My place fineeshed, Meester Morris," his head bowing not because of its nearness to the roof, which was at this point several feet above a standing man's head, and having great beams stretching from side to side.

Morris looked at him, a quizzical smile playing round his lips. He knew the symptoms of asking a favor, although like a medical diagnosis they varied according to circumstances and man. He had a semblance of an idea Pietrecco was suffering from these symptoms: he had no idea of the miner's intention of a cure. It had been one of the young foreman's pet ideals this innocence of graft, petty or grand. It was one of Eldred Morris's most ardent desires to run this first mine, as well as all that might follow it, honestly as he could: to give each man in his turn the best circumstances allowed. He had too much to do to attend to every case, and as was then the custom—and is now, perhaps,—deputed this to men below him in the official scale whom he believed as conscientious and honest as himself. He

believed every man such until proved otherwise. He expected only men of proven experience would under any circumstances be put in dangerous places—that is those where gas existed. All places in the underground are “dangerous” when it comes to generic designation. That this rule of safety-first was being violated for a consideration he did not know, and, woe to the man thus favored who might let him know. Some way would be found to deal with him, as with the agitator even at those mines where The Union is supposedly paramount. This “way” took diametrically opposite courses sometimes, and, I regret to say, a chronic agitator has been known ere this to be inveigled by the “free turn” siren he condemned, and henceforth the union lost a spouter and the mine gained a Judas.

Unfortunately for Pietrecco he began at the very worst place in a series of treacherous points, and proceeded to make bad matters worse. He said again:

“My place fineeshed—you givva me gooda place—we passa him, that place,” smirking in that syncopantic way the poor fellows believe aids in a laudable desire to keep friendly with their superiors in toil.

“What entry you from, Toni; your number;” the foreman rose to go forward, his voice still evidencing a friendliness toward Pietrecco’s purpose, so the miner thought, and nodded, smiled, still more obsequiously. The foreman naturally likes the man who fails him not in a crisis.

Pietrecco forgot to answer; his fingers itched in his pocket; his brain almost burst with the suddenness of two desires. Morris put it plainer—for Toni.

“What number: your check?” his voice wheedling, high, in that combination we use to invoke a foreigner’s reluctant phraseology or a deaf man’s reply.

Pietrecco took from his pocket some round brass checks, and passed one to the foreman.

“This is your section,” the latter replied ominously it

seemed to the miner, and took from his pocket a number of papers. On these smutty leaves the fireboss had marked "places vacant" and "places working," the reason for the former and an approximate estimate of the cost of setting them right. Others were accompanied by the suggestive word: "Gas." Some had heavy falls of strata to be cleaned up; some were faulty because Nature in her vagaries had placed clay-veins where she might have placed coal, and yet again depressed the thickness of the seam and increased the death-dealing slate above it. Many of these Pietrecco knew quite well, having in the preceding days gone about with an eye single to the possible betterment of his condition when he should have found The Inner Wheel. Each day found some of the vacant ones taken, others which had been in operation stopped. With all these changes Antonio had kept in touch.

"This place or that you can have," said Morris at length, pointing to a number and then another.

Toni shook his head. His conception of the numbers was a vivid as the foreman's; the scrawl was as Chinese. He mentioned the place they had left by number, and a sharp change came to the other. "No," he said emphatically, then, softened a little: "Too dangerous—for you—yet awhile, Toni." He slipped the sheaf of papers into his pocket, standing with his characteristic patience. Beside the men sulphuric water rippled merrily toward the great pulsing Camerons at the shaft, for the section they were in was as wet as other parts of the mine were excessively dry.

"I lika one defferent," Pietrecco stubbornly insisted, finger pressing the note in his pocket, fearing mistake in the man, fearing to withhold lest man, place and time be propitious. He knew his desire; no certain way to accomplish it. "My cuison—Bigga Dominic," he again persisted to the easy wonder of the foreman. Morris re-

marked his trembling voice, the unusual agitation in his gesture. Undoubtedly even an Italian stomach wasn't proof against boiled chestnuts and wine. "I lika same place; you givva me I——" the bills crushed in the calloused palm.

"Full up, Toni, except the one place we were in and that's dangerous I told you—for you," came with settled finality. Even the foreman's patience had a limit.

Pietrecco started again: "But, Meester Boss," feebly attempting to conciliate, to soothe and possibly change the verdict of the supreme judge of The Underground, and his effort was nipped by the chilly frost of Authority.

"There's no buts about it! Come on till I show you the place and the work I want done," Eldred Morris swung into the darkness, slightly arrogant, erect, firm in the knowledge that therein he was king. They came to the places encompassing Pietrecco's choice. This way led directly toward an opening recently made out of the mine into a narrow valley. It was low, wet, altogether unlovely even from the miner's unaesthetic perception. The latter gesticulated wildly:

"No gooda place—no mon, never my fam'ly he come from Italee," and adding thereto a diatribe in jumbled Italian and English.

"We'll call at the other one then," Morris acquiesced not so very impatiently. The mine was idle, and no amount of haste would start it that day. Pietrecco took this as a good sign. Morris still went ahead, his safety-lamp keeping time to his step, flinging its flickering shadows forth and back along the black walls. Pietrecco's saw and hatchet jangled an unequal sound unsteady as his step, and again the tension grew unbearable. He stopped, called: "Meester!" and again in his trepidation: "Meester Morris!"

Wondering, the foreman turned suddenly at the voice that sounded weird, unnatural, hollow, tremulous, echo-

ing feebly in the abandoned hollows on either side. A soft ball was thrust into his hand and he lifted his light to examine it.

Antonio accepted this as preliminary acceptance of his design. "It's allaright—allaright," he hastened to assure, "Dominic: my cuuson he say——."

But he got no further. Perhaps it was as well the poor, deluded toiler, deluded and discriminated against as many another of Anglo-Saxon blood with all his native pride has been, did not see The Great One's face as he lowered his light and tossed the paper back viciously, and with it an exclamation:

"What in hell do you take me for?"

The tone of the question was so fierce that Pietrecco failed to express his valuation of the foreman in audible terms. Like one suddenly stricken with palsy he stood there essaying neither speech nor movement. Morris helped him to equilibrium:

"You'll go into the place we looked at," he said firmly. "Even if it is wet, there's no gas there."

Some of that Antonio understood; some he didn't, which did not matter. He knew enough.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNDERGROUND DRAMA

Act Three: The Penalty

It was about twelve o'clock when Pietrecco laid his kit at the place designated by the foreman as "the wet one." It had taken him but an hour to complete the job to which Eldred Morris had assigned him, after amending his outburst by assuring the miner that he would put in a full day's pay for him no matter how soon he finished because of the early morning's start and other considerations.

This accomplished the miner wearily retraced his steps to the place where the great incident had occurred. Morris had gone out of the opening in the valley. He was dog-tired and hungry. And while he ate on the surface another spent an hour scrutinizing minutely every inch of the road where they had stood when the foreman spoke so harshly. He found no trace of that he desired. Finding it not in a piece he hoped for bits, assuming Morris's temper had caused him to tear it to shreds and scatter in the darkness above the lamp's rays. Neither found he the money piece-meal, while beside him mockingly rippled the water that had carried it to the huge pumps, but the sound was a dirge to Pietrecco.

Almost mechanically he started away, drawn by one dominant thought to the place he had suggested and been denied. The fact of its obvious danger had no significance just then in the miner's mind. At another time the sight of the board set carefully at the entrance would have deterred him with the same fear of passing as sud-

denly coming upon a rattler along the path from Calabrué's to *The Effie*.

Having reached there he sat down on the wooden rail. His heavy Italian timepiece told him the surface sun was past the meridian, but sorrow had killed his appetite for food. There came, however, a strong desire to smoke. In that part of the mine cigarettes were tabooed by the same token matches are generally not ignited in a powder magazine. Where Pietrecco sat the air was free of that mixture which makes for danger, but beyond great bell-shaped cavities were undoubtedly full of it. In ordinary times he would not have gone near. Neither would he have disobeyed The Law by bringing to hand a book of Rizla and wrapping therein some savory tobacco. But this was no ordinary time for Pietrecco. The frenzy of the mind intoxicated by liquor or emotional insanity is most dangerous immediately before the narcotic stage is reached. The miner was at that stage.

As the gray smoke rolled upward he reckoned an approximate time which must elapse ere he regained the ground lost that day, and a full round Italian oath escaped him. He bethought himself of other mines, but there came to him bits of conversation heard from other miners at Calabrué's who had come back to the village worse off than they left. The entire district and the nation were panic-stricken. Men had emptied their purses of that they had in journeying to find something better. And such thoughts as these lessened not the miner's perturbation but they did increase the clouds of smoke.

"I've stolen the lamb," said he, or words to the same effect, "and if I hang I'll have had the sheep." Therefore in utter disregard of consequences he rolled another and yet another which in small degree seemed to appease the sullen antagonism against all things, including life. He threw the last stub into the goaf and settled himself against the coal to dream, and, dreaming, transform pas-

sive enmity into active homicide. More so than anything that had passed between him and Morris this state of mind was prompted by the miner conjuring a stony slope, a rough-built cottage, the dark, smiling faces of children: His Own. Then for a moment the ugly mood passed and his heavy features lighted with a smile, while his eyes sought without purpose the tiny light of his safety-lamp.

"I will write long tonight," he brushed the tiny brass bars standing vertically against the glass circle lovingly, in his heart caressing a more tender thing and animate. Then suddenly: "But no I cannot what can I tell? not that!" Then more softly still: "Maria—Antonio—Louy and—and the bambino since I came—Sophy, perhaps"

Pietrecco stopped and his lustrously dark eyes filled and wet the carbon dust on his blouse. And the names of all on earth who were to him most dear echoing back into a soul sensitive if ignorant grew into an unutterable desire: a desire men know but two ways to overcome: gratification or death. Under its lashing Pietrecco's mind was not his own: his every act the prompting of an Invisible Something greater than himself. There came to him the sudden, terrible idea of revenge, more ruthless of consequence in his race than others, and refined of all counterbalance in the way of slightest reason. Sufficient if it would encompass Dominic and the others getting coal ready for—torturous thought—more money on the morrow than he would make in a week!

In the distance he could hear them plainly, and through a break in the rib the air from the great fan rushed strongly toward the lights he had seen. The same hauliers drew coal from this place as from Dominic, and he had heard that surplus wagons were sometimes of an afternoon distributed, when the more favored places were cleaned out of ready coal, as a means of the drivers putting in a full day to the most advantage. Here also he

could keep in closer touch with Dominic, and could get him to show wherein the "danger" lay that Morris had emphasized as his reason for refusing.

The homicidal mood had passed and in its stead a determination to investigate things for himself and wait for a better time. Italian emotion is decidedly evanescent as well as frequently recurrent. There was no difference in the air where he now stood and in his own place in the other section that he could see. It all looked clear and alike. Perhaps it was in some other form farther in. But he would first have another smoke. One more could not make matters worse, and the matches he had hitherto struck had burned clearly without danger. Perhaps this was merely the American's polite way of refusing the miner a place? But then what of Dominic—Ah! who could understand these English words and the men who used them!

He rose and went inward past the line of working: he was already beyond that point which even he knew he was not supposed to pass according to The Law of The Land and The Law of The Mine. But he went slowly, and by instinct cautiously. A narrow passage only partly filled with fallen rock left just enough room for ingress. The old "face" of the coal would tell him, when he reached it, the money-making possibilities, better than anything else. Perhaps Strafford might—or Dominic—this place might still be his.

His features were no longer ferocious but had become settled in tremulous calm; his heart beat normal. A huge skulking rat startled him, then another, both running outward hurriedly as if chased by something unseen. This was an unpropitious sign Pietrecco had heard, and he moved a little from the roof-broken zone. A small clatter away off in the darkness drew Antonio still further from his design. He stopped, looked up, and listened to a deep rumble. It passed, and Pietrecco attributed it to the possible moving of empty coal cars in the distance

where Dominic and the others worked, or to his own nervousness. His cigarette had gone out, and he stood undecided for a moment as to returning or continuing on, match aflame at the tobacco, his back against the coal-rib, when, suddenly, the still lighted match in sheer fear was dropped, and his hand clutched the safety-lamp he had set on a rock at his feet while he struck it.

Bending as from a coming blow, Pietrecco started to sidle back toward the board with its DANGER lying face in the dust, while Cohesion grew every moment weaker in its bout with Gravitation. His back continued bent, his eyes still peering among the grayish muck of the mine floor, so rough when one hastened with such feeble light, when the elemental battle ended in a sudden fall which forced the marsh-gas downward. There came a light, and still greater it grew and sudden, the primary symbol of death: the harbinger of woe to our village. And behind it all came the slow falling of grayish dust and—silence.

* * * * *

With the demise of Strafford and a dozen others Antonio Pietrecco brought harm upon others besides himself and the miners' wives who, as was usual at that time, were left to take care of themselves. A fund of some nine hundred dollars gathered by the miners of the district and a local paper published in Colville* decently disposed of the dead, but, being spent thus failed to help the living to any appreciable extent.

The commencement of Fall Term at Colville College found Miss Sophia Garrul working for Mrs. Rummel instead at the big house above *The Effie*, and Miss Wilkes washing dishes for Mrs. Wilkes: a case of forsaking Virgil for Wedgewood.

*See COLVILLE WEEKLY NEWS for this period, wherein is contained a full description of this explosion and sequent events.

The explosion came between terms, and the fees laid aside for the ensuing year enabled Roger Wilkes to do much traveling, but it availed not. The mining industry was at low ebb and men with money to invest "didn't care to wrap it round matches in a powder mill." When matters were at their very worst, and the steady contract seemed on the point of going elsewhere as a permanent fixture, much dust was raised between Colville Bank and the big house with the frequent passage to and from those places of the banker's gig and Wilkes's carriage. And finally Darrel blew the whistle for work—and everything and everyone—almost—seemed happy.

Of all interested the fast-aging Roger alone bore depression written on his face, which was strange indeed for a man whose hired Sophy had openly expressed herself as better satisfied to work at Wilkes's for her board alone than for board and wages at the banker's wife's, and had consequently resumed duty at the old stand. That Miss Sophia accepted the former weekly stipend as well as board at Wilkes's had nothing whatsoever to do with her opinion as expressed at Emily Morris's and Mary MacDonald's. The facts are as stated, also that said Roger's daughter had resumed her friendship with Virgil on the same day the mine resumed with more men than it had ever employed before.

Roger Wilkes had found money aplenty at last—somewhere—to rebuild the wrecked mine. That many others as well as he were fated to pay mental as well as pecuniary interest compounded on his borrowings became evident when events—but—that must come later. Let us to our story by introducing personally to you, gentle reader, our ferocious friend, Micky Gawan, the same whose blood-lust, according to the story of Bobbie Burns MacDonald, prompted the loading of a rifle with the sole purpose of putting an end to the career of Pete and Little Nellie.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LOCAL PRESIDENT

The occasion was the funeral of a miner from a nearby mine who had been crushed with a fall of slate: an occurrence so common in the district at that time that it scarcely commanded a stick of type in *The Colville Weekly News* nor more than two lines in the Pittsburg dailies. His comrades had just then hardly money for bread to keep the living let alone undertaker's fees for the dead. The County had buried him.

"I've offen thought," said Micky Gawan to his slender better-half, who weighed 150 pounds more than the little stable-boss, "that if I'm alive an' well when I'm kilt, an' have any say in the matter at all, I should prefer goin' off like Pietrecco an' them fellers—somethin' excitin' like yer know."

"Yer see, me little darlin'," Micky turned to the very large woman beside him with a look far more solemn than his thought created in him, "it's so much better fer the widder is what I'm always thinkin' on, instid of the common way we miners has of gettin' smashed up with a ton or two of rock."

Gawan's nearest approach to the title of miner lay in his dispensing the powder and dynamite at Wilkes's magazine, hence, this allusion brought from the Morris's who accompanied him a benign smile and from Mrs. Gawan a poke in the ribs and a word of bantering contempt anent a chronic fear of the mine. The former tickled him; the latter he ignored. He addressed the elder Morris.

"Yer see, Jack, a man can get kilt a half dozen times if he's a mind to in the reg'lar way an' it don't make enuff fuss to decently bury him." Then to his wife: "So fer that reason, Mrs. Gawan, if I have any say as to how you shall be a widder, I'll let the grass grow long an' dry aroun' Wilkes's powder magazine an' light me pipe handy it someday an' ferget the match."

"Mike," returned John Morris very earnestly, "there's more than funniness in what you say," which was directed to the other members of the party rather than Gawan. "The public don't think of us when we get killed one at a time; if there's hundreds they do, but I don't see as how the widder an' little uns of the man as is killed with slate can get on without bread anymore than them as is blown up, can you, Emmy?"

Mrs. Morris, more corpulent than she used to be, nodded; she was thinking how little the bread left for the widows of *The Effie's* miniature explosion after the relief fund had been distributed among the undertakers. She was too breathless to argue the point.

"The method's uncertain," interjected the foreman, "and always will be under voluntary contribution," but added, since he doubtless felt the truth of Gawan's words: "Even an up-and-down way is better than nothing at such times. It does show that The Public is at heart sympathetic, and that this suffering is caused by thoughtlessness and ignorance of real conditions rather than indifference, don't you think so, mother?"

"I do, my son," Emily Morris exerted herself to reply to the young man's question. The erstwhile pupil of fractions and English was answering his own ethical problems nowadays, and rarely bespoke his first and best-loved teacher's concurrence. "We Americans are noted the world over for alleviating distress, Eldred, and charity begins at home, first, or should do."

"Oh, of course, of course," Micky hastened to assure

the younger man. "I'm not sayin' as how the collections ain't useful, not at all, fer that's just what I mean, that if a man has to pick a way to pass in his checks it would pay him to do it the way as brings in the most money, until it's fixed as one way brings in as much as another. You see, Mr. Morris, I've binn brought to them conclusions," the little man winked slyly past Eldred, "because I have to bury such mules as happens with misfortune. An' I got at times to likenin' 'em with men as comin' up on the cage in pritty much the same way and——."

"More's to your shame, Mike Gawan," said the partner of his joys and sorrows.

"I reckon," Gawan flatly agreed, "but I done it because I couldn't help but think as how this here dead mule Barney is worth as much insurance to Wilkes as that dead mule Jack as was killed in that little explosion up Strafford's way, because Wilkes insures 'em all alike. An' yet, thinks I, Barney here was shot after bein' kilt with a chunk of rock being so ungentle as to fall on him, while Jack was wise enuff to go off more sudden. But men, thinks I, as should surely be worth as much as a mule, ain't worth nothin'."

"Because Wilkes don't have to replace *them* nor keep the families, an' The Public as does hasn't got around to it yet but they will," John Morris said slowly, nodding "Good Day" to Collson sitting beneath the big pine in his yard, and, after shooing Pete from Mrs. Morris's dress, enquired after the "rheumatticks" that had kept the old lampman at home that day, "yes, Micky, it won't be long until men'll be worth more even to the company than mules."

"But as long as they ain't, Mr. Morris," the slender lady accompanying the little stableman bawled breathlessly over her shoulder as the pair parted from Morris's and started unequally toward the row where they lived, "I think I'd better trade Gawan off for a pair of mules,

don't you think?" and the way the little man looked at her one would have thought she meant it.

The Morris home was nearer, and while the men settled themselves on the porch Mrs. Morris went in to dispose of oppressive clothing. Eldred seated himself comfortably in a large wicker rocker, tilted it back, set his feet on the railing and proceeded to state a purpose that had kept his tongue almost silent all the way home, and his mind busy with the all-important matter—to him just then.

"If Gawan hadn't been with us I should have spoken of it sooner," he started by way of introduction, and lighting a cigar, after having handed one to his father.

"Well," returned the latter, "if it's good it'll keep, I reckon, an' if it's bad there's no hurry." The interests of father and son were taking opposite courses.

"It's neither—that is," Eldred Morris quickly corrected himself, "it's no news at all, only a favor I want you to do for me: something that means more to me than anything I have ever asked you before."

For a moment John Morris looked closely at his son, a questioning light flooding his large, steel-blue, fearless, fighting eyes. Eldred looked aimlessly at the gray ash beginning to form on his cigar. Across the mirror of John Morris's mind there flitted a girl, but this passed. Eldred would not ask his father's opinion there, nor favor. That question had been debated to a settled status. The elder gave his interrogation words:

"If it's anythin' I can do with a clear conscience, my boy, the favor's yours without askin'."

"Well, I believe it is. I want you to let up on this union agitation and—" Eldred faltered a moment—"and do what you can to get the mine back the way it was before . . ." crushing back words that came to his lips anent much "wire pulling" he had been impelled to do with Turley to obtain a re-instatement of John Morris

in the company's favor. Perhaps it had been better said, for the changing colors on the elder man's face made obvious to the son that the proposition was a decided surprise, and one foredoomed as being to the other almost an insult.

To John Morris being unionized meant the same as State-wide prohibition means to the intolerant disciples of grape-juice and buttermilk: the panacea of all human ills. Like most men he had one paramount obsession. This was his. Moreover, he had had peace too long to remain content. Eldred Morris stammered doubtfully, his father remaining silent, waiting for him to finish.

"The men will be none the worse for it while I'm in charge if I can help it, and you'll be a great deal better," he added meaningfully. Then speaking to his mother who had just come onto the porch: "Sit here between me and dad."

"Why, you're not going to fight, I hope," Mrs. Morris smiled outwardly as she took the chair pulled forward by Eldred, in her heart sensing another conflict of opinion such as were becoming too frequent for her peace of mind, at least. Her quick eyes remarked in semi-alarm the change in her husband and the quiet but sullen attitude of her son.

"Oh, no," the latter assured her, smiling away her fears, "but I want dad to do something——."

"That dad ain't likely to do, my son, not if he had your interest as *The Effie's* foreman ten thousand times more to heart," interposed John Morris with much emphasis. The agitator deals largely in extravagances as well as inconvertible fact. "The welfare of too many families is at stake," he added. Then, more quietly: "You was speakin' for Wilkes, or just yourself?"

Eldred bridled instantly. "There's nobody in it but me—not yet; but it wont be long until there is if it's kept up," he replied suggestively.

John Morris ignored the latter. "Then I can th' easier refuse, though it might benefit you a little no doubt by agreein'."

"A little!" Eldred's eyes flew wide open. "I'd hardly ask you to do it unless it meant more than a little. It simply means that instead of two masters to please and suggest how I shall do my work, and who I shall employ or discharge, I'd have two hundred and fifty. And that many men working peaceably are enough to handle, dad."

There was as yet no definite recognition of the union at the mine, but there was a strong undercurrent of authority growing in the "Pit Committee," and a decided tendency to ostracise and otherwise deal harshly with those employees as yet indifferent to the change. The woman rocked through the silence.

"A foreman's actions have their own Law-prescribed limitations," Eldred resumed, "and the union would limit them still more."

"That is provided it's powerful enough," rejoined John Morris, speaking to past experience. "Men are like monkeys an' parrots in imitatin' what others do, an' while you foremen an' superintendents have state certificates the men have numbers an' the majority rules, Eldred. But supposin' I did do as you wanted wouldn't they get another man or a dozen in as president of the local? Sure, an' they would right away," John Morris summed up his opinion of the difficulty.

"Yes, and perhaps one not as good as your father where you are concerned, Eldred," interposed Emily Morris solicitously.

"Nor Wilkes an' Elizabeth," the blue eyes beside her twinkled while the tongue below them probed. Emily Morris also made a little inquiry in the same direction, while seemingly trying to cut off the very thing she sought, by asking John Morris with large surprise if he

was so anxious as that to lose their son since he rang in young women who had nothing to do with the matter. "I shouldn't wonder but you'll lose him soon enough."

"No more than we've done already, Emmy, I hope," Morris retorted with much meaning unexpressed in his words. "I reckon when it comes to gettin' into the Wilkes family he won't need any help of mine no more than his dad did," at which Emily Morris smiled affectionately upon The Local President, and reminiscently bethought her of her lover's impetuous and insistent wooing. "But he'll need all the get-up he's got an' the job with more money in it as he ain't—unless I'm a poor judge of *some* women's nature, Emmy Morris," which left to the auditor the decision as to which of the two women at Wilkes's John Morris referred to.

Obviously for his specific elucidation the elder continued as the young man came from the kitchen where he had gone in search of matches: "It ain't always the young feller as is the squarest of shoulder an' morals as the girl takes, more's the pity for Lizzie Wilkes or any other who's daddy-in-law-to-be has money not only for mines, Emmy, but to buy the daughter-in-law too in some——."

The miner's diatribe on marital problems was cut short by a heavy hand laid on his shoulder, and a face above him darkened, with lips set hard and firm. "Alright, son," he yielded, and the mother looked her anxiety while her husband's pipe beclouded the atmosphere to an extent more dangerous to Emily Morris's comfort than the cigar had done. "But I was thinkin'," the still undaunted orator persisted, "what unexpected things does turn up to bring girls into families as daughters-in-laws, sometimes, an' was supposin' for a minute that you an' Lizzie Wilkes was married, for the men to go on workin' under the old conditions instead of them they've got ready

for Roger to sign as—as soon as they're stronger—that it would make it better for the employin' families as you'd be mixed with an'——.”

“Say himself,” urged Mrs. Morris, setting her hand over her husband's mouth and pushing the hot pipe dangerously near his cheek.

“Himself, then,” agreed the accomodating unionist, returning instantly to the mooted point, “in the employin' family, but what would it mean for a hundred others like us?”

“Steadier work and no strikes over this, that and the other thing,” retorted Eldred, looking into the fringe of a coppice hiding the home of Elizabeth from his sight.

“P'raps . . . but lower wages an' longer hours for sure, while Rummel has anythin' to say anyway.”

As this was but a confirmation of his own assertions, probably at times indiscreet as they were true and earnest, the young foreman made no denial. He preferred to evade discussion just then of the sub-rosa ownership. He contented himself by asserting his belief that if the ex-miner found it possible to advance wages and decrease hours he would do so without compulsion or coercion.

“I've no doubt about——Wilkes doin' it; I have about it bein' done at *The Effie*,” John Morris replied sententiously, emptying his pipe of its ash over the veranda rail. “If it is done voluntar'y all the papers in The United States will have it in six inch types,” The Local President exaggerated out of pure joyousness of spirit. The opposing counsel seemed to have a poor case. “Ain't there always some notes due, a first mortgage or somethin', some new machinery needed or another mine somewhere to be had at a bargain, or wife an' daughter wants a new concutt-grand pianner while the poor digger's daughter or sweetheart—who is just as sweet an' lovable—can't get a second-hand organ at ten dollars, an'

has to wash her wrapper on Saturday nights so she can appear respectable on Sunday mornin', don't she, Emmy?"

"Emmy" smiled and rocked, entering fully into the humor of her husband's "agitator speech," informal though it was, with all the ardor that had characterized their courting days. John Morris had every word by heart, having repeated it scores of times before his first son was born. The fact that it was true only in the specific rather than the generic state bore no significance to him. The metaphorical allusion of the true "spouter" needs not necessarily run parallel with actuality. And by this time Eldred Morris had also caught the contagion. He clapped his open palm on his fathers' knee and told him:

"That's a good one, dad; might as well be hanged for an old sheep as a young lamb, I reckon," thinking at the same time of the similarity in value of Margaret Thomas's chiffon and Elizabeth Wilkes's lawn.

"But there's truth in it, ain't there, boy?" the orator questioned.

"Yes, if you hunt for it with a miscroscope," truculently retorted the foreman, still endeavoring to smile through the chagrin natural because of the failure of his half-hearted request.

"Or if you don't; ain't the company in the business to get all it can out of it?" persisted Morris, "an' ain't it human nature to take the biggest share if the other feller will let you? Oh, boy, oh boy! them books of yours don't learn you all as is to be learned in minin' life."

"Of course if you look at it in that way," Eldred went still deeper into the rut, "everyone's naturally on the lookout for his own interest first; that is, speaking generally, an incontrovertible fact."

"Exactly; that's why I think the men'll do right in joinin' their fellers in this district as soon as possible.

It's the only way of gettin' what belongs to 'em."

"But don't you think they could have picked a better time to start this thing up than just now?" The Idealist sullenly persisted. "It seems too much like kicking a man when he's down."

"More like askin' him if he'll do so an' so before you let him get up, ain't it, Eldred?" queried Morris with a chuckle. Then: "The whole thing's a good bit like playin' a game of checkers with Collson or MacDonald: get your man in a corner then jump him to the king-row," again chuckling heartily.

Eldred was too moody to see anything laughable in it.

"Did any of the operators, while this field was all unorganized, ever send someone round to make sure their men's cupboards was full an' their credit good at Bilkin's Store an' at Colville before postin' a cut, an' if they found it wasn't put the notice of reduction in their pocket till it was? Oh, Eldred, boy! I had no idee bein' in love with th' operator's daughter would make the foreman as blind as that. I'd surely thought all them letters an' book-learnin' would help you to see further through a brick wall than the trowel marks on the mortar, wouldn't you, Emmy?" Morris turned to the chair where his wife had been sitting. Unnoticed she had slipped in to get supper for the family.

"Well, I'll learn," the younger man retorted. "Two can play at most games."

The miner looked at his son quizzically, then, sensing what he thought his meaning, vexed. He added a word of warning and reproof:

"I hope your wantin' to get even won't never run away with your sense, Eldred, nor make you selfish enough to take what ain't rightfully yours because you might be in a position to do it. A man don't have to be told where to cut th' apple if he's the right kind, boy."

Eldred Morris explained more thoughtfully: "I didn't

exactly mean that. What I did mean was that if I felt I was in the right I wouldn't scruple to put in a blow or two, while the other fellow was down, to clinch my argument, that is when I have authority I haven't got now, which I shall have some day, perhaps," he added optimistically as an afterthought.

Mrs. Morris called them in to supper, hoping to shut off the always dangerous theme between these two. The miner continued it after they were seated, letting his tea and food cool rather than lose an opportunity to carry a point.

"If you think you're right, man to man, an' accordin' to the way of fightin' such things to a finish, all well an' good. But I hope your mother nor me won't never live to see you do otherwise, Eldred, an' a little questionin' of conscience an' lookin' at the thing from t'other man's point of view as well as your own will always tell you."

John Morris attacked the lesser problem on his plate, while his son ate also in silence, head bowed, seemingly somewhat dejected. Mrs. Morris didn't make it any better by adding:

"No, my boy, don't ever be guilty of doing anything to the men under you, no matter how powerful you might be, as I, for one, have hope you will be," she beamed, "that you wouldn't like done to you in their place," ended the motherly counsel that was all love and sympathy, as Emily Morris poised above her son's cup the Sunday tea-pot of triple-plate and looked at the china appropriately iterating her sentiment in a gilded motto of "Remember Me." Mrs. Morris had been a miner's wife a good number of years longer than the mother of a foreman in the same industry, and her quick sympathies were yet with the men of the pick and shovel rather than those whose tools were the anemometer and the Davy Lamp. And then, following a question from Eldred as to Tom's

whereabouts and his not being at table she spoke more sorrowfully.

"Ah, Eldred, there's *real* trouble going to come on your father and me one of these days. If only Esther was as sensible as—as Elizabeth on Wednesday night when she and that young Methodist minister came over with the 'Piscopalian preacher from Colville! There's a sensible girl for you, John Morris . . . if I do say it before Eldred"

The mother in Emily Morris fought hard against her saying it, however, but the instinctive trait of woman to further mating won out. One part of her would have died of grief to lose her boy to another woman, the other half of joy in exultation of its satisfactory accomplishment.

John Morris looked up from his egg, his face drawn like a U. P. Elder's at Fourthly's last round. His eyes looked the interrogation his tongue could not resist.

"Have you ever heard me say anythin' to the opposite, Mrs. Morris?" he drawled, "that you seen fit to emfursize the contrast so strong?" Then, after a moment's pause: "I should think it would be more fittin' for me to say, 'There's a fine sensible daughter-in-law for you, Emmy Morris,' if you can bear it."

"I'm thinking unless my eyes are failing me I'll have worse to bear before long," the matron diverted the subject as she moved slowly about the table clearing up the dishes, her ample bosom heaving with the slight exertion, and her face which had been drawn now smiling. Emily Morris was a true daughter of Eve, and, while one of the best of women, took a secret delight in an *affaire d'amour*. But like the good mother she was she hoped even while she feared for a satisfactory outcome. Eldred had not seen Esther recently. He said as much, and that he thought his mother's suspicions unfounded.

"You old married women are always getting the young

and pretty ones that aren't married into such difficulties," he smiled across at her, "aren't they, dad?"

"I believe they do enjoy it a bit—must put 'em in mind of their own younger days," casually remarked The Local President, pulling slowly on a pipe which a moment later went sailing over the carpet. Half angrily, Emily Morris had resented the insinuation she wrongly conceived directed at herself.

"Ho, ho!" Morris exclaimed, bending to pick it up, "mother's gettin' mad, now, my boy; better cut the girls out an' take dynamite or the union as somethin' peaceable to talk about," his sides shaking with laughter at the little riffle in the usual calm. The woman standing at Eldred's side wasn't. She was undecided whether to laugh or cry, but seeing the two men taking the matter in good humor burst into a smile, too. Then, without the least pretension, she went over to Morris and put her arms around his neck and kissed him. The union had won this battle anyhow.

"You know I didn't mean it," the dark eyes looked up to the blue ones, her voice tremulous.

"Nor me neither, Emmy-love," which was the very apex in the miner's pyramid of affectionate expression verbally, as he put his arm round her waist.

Eldred Morris had discreetly gone to the porch, where a moment later he was joined by his father and the young couple whose adventures in love had been the cause of the scene. Mrs. Morris, hearing Esther's voice, came out also, and with suspicious smoothness the conversation turned into other channels.

Quite serenly Mrs. Morris set forth a chair for the dark-haired young lady who was no longer in her employ, and, skillfully as women can, led the talk into a smoothing expression regarding the exquisite joy it would have given her if the two girls had only been there together. As it was she was glad to see Esther,

to note—with lingering scrutiny—how well she was looking: her Aunt MacDonald and she had remarked the very same thing only yesterday, and said what a pity it was that Esther couldn't have a steady place with Mrs. Wilkes or Mrs. Turley or even Mrs. Rummel, but, they both supposed (simultaneously) that the latter was too close to keep a woman to do all her work *et cetra* and *et cetra*.

And poor Esther blushed furiously, then, even while the older woman's eyes still rested on her form, turned suddenly white and fanned herself with her tiny handkerchief, remarking that Tom and she had walked rather fast from the funeral in order to be in time for supper, and that "the day was terrible hot," didn't Mrs. Morris think so?

Poor Esther! What shifts a torturing conscience doth make!

CHAPTER X.

THE SUBSTITUTE

On the Saturday afternoon of the week following Elizabeth Wilkes ordered Gawan to hitch up the family carriage to convey her immaculately—as became the young lady of most distinction in Carbonia—to the dance in Collson's Grove.

"Mr. Morris will drive, and put the horses in," she told Gawan sweetly, "so I suppose you can go when you're ready." Then she flitted up the steps into the house. Mickey played the cello in our local "orchestra."

He followed from the garden where he had been doing some chores, branching off at right angles to reach the stables, and muttering regarding the luck of some people as to others, and one young gentleman of his acquaintance in particular. "There he goes an' gets a bit of paper with a lot of dufunnies on it as sets him over men old enuff to be his grandaddy, an' as if that ain't sufficient for a bye of his tender age he's goin' to cut young Rummel out wi' all his ryulties an' banks unless Micky's losin' his eyesight. No such thing as luck? Well I should say as how could there be when one or two hog it all, an' that's a fac', Jimmie," addressing the chore boy who was ridding up for the night. "An' they sayin' as if he'd wrassle a bit more with the pen an' a little less with buckin' pumps an' fans an' things that nothin' in the line o' business would be beyant him, not even general superintendent or minin' engineer."

Jimmie set aside some harness he had been oiling and wiped his hands on his trousers. "My dad says as he

thinks Jack Morris's boy'll have Mr. Turley's place some-day, or maybe better, an' them on'y diggers like him

"Exactly," agreed the amiable Gawan, "which is a good warnin' for ye, Jimmie, lad, a pritty good warnin' for ye to do the same, maybe."

Alas for poor Jimmie. Carbonia had not a few such unfortunates cursed with a lax parentage which draws back the little it could do even without the sacrifice of its own desires, and, having tossed the child into the sea of life leave it to sink if it will. Jimmie couldn't add a sum in addition had he been offered a gold coin for each numeral. Yet some of us even in Carbonia see naught but autocracy in compulsory schooling! Jimmie, grown, would sun-broil the little brains he had seeking for sulphur and slate on some uncovered mine tipple, or tend a pump he never understands below ground for a mere pittance: the native nonentities of an industry having unlimited possibilities for all.

It was a curious coincidence indeed, one must confess, that this same subject should have been under discussion in another place nearby. Roger Wilkes turned from the window, from which the path reaching to Morris's at one end and *The Effie* at the other was plainly visible, to explain to Elizabeth why the foreman was so often delayed. During that meal his wife and daughter were made aware of certain conditions which sometimes upset everybody's calculations and keep the repair-gangs moving from the order of work as originally laid out. "And of course the foreman must look after that even if one shift does sometimes stretch into two—for him. Why," he smiled over at Mrs. Wilkes, "if that boy's pay had been by the hour this last month I'll swear his salary would be double. But we're getting there, Effie; we're getting there. We'll soon have to furnish him an assistant, and if MacDonald gets that certificate he's

after I think he'll be the man," sagely remarked Wilkes, doing certain occult sums in calculation by adding to and detracting from a pile of crumbs. "He has a big family, you know, and, well, the store must be looked after, too," Roger added suggestively.

While her father spoke of Eldred Morris Elizabeth's cheeks changed to a deeper crimson, and her eyes sparkled with amusement at his suggestion regarding MacDonald and the store as she watched the erstwhile miner wipe his hands quite complacently on his napkin, and his lips after drinking on the same article instead of the back of his hairy hand. He had not always done so, but persistence on the feminine side of the house had won out in the end as it generally does.

Mrs. Wilkes returned to the subject by a suggestion that *she* in her husband's place would also consider the advisability of a man of family as chief foreman under similar circumstances. Effie Wilkes had known the pangs of poverty semi and complete so long that she had ever a latent dread of its return in some insidious way. Any official move that bolstered the intermediate position in which the family then existed never passed without in a certain sense having her sanction. Wilkes shook his head.

"We might scour the district and the entire list of eligibles and not get such another as Morris. I know he looks young," he added parenthetically, "for such a responsible position, as I've often remarked to Turley, but as Sam says there's the right stuff in him—for us." Roger Wilkes divided the pile of crumbs. "We might get the store percentage of his hundred a month, we'll say; that's this pile," shoving aside a heap about the size of a walnut, "and lose this," putting the partly-cut loaf beside it, "in decreased output and increased expense. In the lower men—those who get their orders from Morris—the work isn't original, and no changes are made

involving a large outlay as a result of their ideas. In that case men who deal largely at the store have the preference when possible for us to discriminate. If we have aces we play them, Effie, if the other fellow has them to our kings we play accordingly."

"Oh, I see," languidly replied the little lady at the table's opposite side. "But so far in all your calculations I have heard you mention your superintendent but twice, Roger. What does Brother Sam do for his salary?" Mrs. Wilkes dipped her nose to a bouquet that had added charm of color to that Saturday afternoon meal.

"Turley found Morris's work too practically common-sense when he was able to get around to interfere much, Effie; he does less now. But," hastened Turley's brother-in-law in apology: "he has plenty to look after. A mine like ours turns up a multitude of things on the surface as well as below, and someone must be there to see that our interests are—er—are—."

"Conserved," Elizabeth smiled at the quondam miner's efforts to use a synonym for "looked after."

"Yes, preserved, Lizzie, that's just the word; means putting dollars in the bank to pay overdue notes in this case instead of taking fruit out of a jar in the other," and Wilkes wondered why Elizabeth looked so oddly at him and both women laughed. "Turley's badly crippled," he went on regardless, "but not in that part that prevents him from sizing up a foreman's efficiency by the length of the black stream as a yard stick. The amount of coal that goes into the flats is the last and best test after all of a man's worth to *us*."

Wilkes paused, poising a match before the end of a cigar. Strange is this eloquence that springs from opposite sources in the same brain! The day had been, and it didn't seem so long ago either, when Roger Wilkes would have spoken more crude but with equal conviction on the demerits of such a procedure in preference, citing

numberless instances now grouped in the title of "Safety First" to prove it wrong. Verily that philosophy were poor indeed that need go far to find spokes running diametrically opposite from the same hub either in a carriage factory or the human hive.

At the table Elizabeth moodily toyed with her cup. Pushing it aside she plucked a pink flower from the table vase and tore petal from beside petal until the white cloth was littered with a pale crimson heap. She had at her tongue's end a question regarding Morris, but, crushing it back with changing color and mind she went to her room. Then, having looked at the clock Elizabeth looked out of the window.

The path stretched its green edges toward Morris's and thence to the village. Neither man, maid nor child traversed it. She heard her father go down the walk on his way to Colville, which he invariably did now each week end. The four mile walk there and back did him good, he said, failing to specify whether physically or mentally. He rarely used the carriage.

Now slightly impatient with Eldred Morris's delinquency—quite a frequent occurrence in this premise, by the way—Miss Wilkes returned to her dressing table and pulled off a pair of mouse-colored kid gloves reaching nearly to the lace on her elbows, then having looked out of the window again she pulled them on again for the second time. She buttoned them slowly and looked at the clock which didn't seem to be in any haste at all. She slipped down to the kitchen, intending to ask Sophie, the maid, to go to Morris's—where Eldred of course now lived—in the hope that he had perhaps gone around another way. She even framed the words for the girl to use to cast aside any suspicion as to her real purpose in being there, but the kitchen was empty. Sophie also was going to the grove, but being less conventional than her young mistress had gone voluntarily to meet "her feller." There's merit and peace of mind sometimes in humility.

And still Elizabeth waited, ostensibly reading, in reality seeing only those who now were going past toward the wood. Some she knew and spoke to, some of the girls she nodded and waved at with a few square inches of cambric as the flag of friendliness. Most of the men were sober, neatly dressed and well behaved, some carelessly so and still more carelessly washed, the rims of their eyelashes still embellished with the black dust of the mine. These neither spoke to Elizabeth nor she to them. One only seemed the worse of liquor: a young man recently discharged by Morris for abusing a mule. "A tough proposition," Eldred had called him the night of the benefit in Fraternal Hall when Constable Collson and the foreman had put him out. When he came opposite Elizabeth heard the foreman's name coupled with a threat of somebody getting a licking that night. The rest of the group pulled him hurriedly past.

Again she looked at the clock, while through the open window the wind brought the rough "tuning" notes of Gawan's violoncello, and debated with her desire the wisdom of going to the dance that night anyhow. If the disgruntled mule driver met Morris it would likely cause trouble; if the latter came it would seem like implying cowardice if she explained, and her motive stood every chance of misconstruction if she didn't. She would go—certainly—if he came . . . He didn't.

Amos Rummel, opportunely as the hero in a book, did. The dances in the grove were widely known and generally patronized. Many young people came up from the college town, where all such affairs were tabooed by the faculty because of the students who sought what they were denied there at other places, as always has been the way of Youth. Such a group stopped for a moment to speak with Elizabeth. The others went on while Rummel remained. On opposite sides man and maid leaned over the gate at the bottom of the walk, a finely-built

and handsome rascal, he, with eyes as blue as the girl's own, as finely-attired as she, and wearing to boot an invariable smile and a devil-may-care personality strangely pleasing to young women from 20 to 60.

He coaxed sedulously, mildly, and only briefly did Elizabeth waver. She was as inordinately fond of the fantastic maze as Amos. Neither toward the mine nor Morris's was there now a man in sight, but at the veranda behind them a woman stepped onto the walk. Elizabeth ran back, flushed and flustered, nervous from the long tension and indecision.

"Amos wants me to go with him, mother," she whispered, crimsoning to the tips of her ears. In the distance the group from Colville could be heard but not seen. They were very happy, as denoted by loud laughter. Mrs. Wilkes moved as majestically as a little woman may toward the gate, her daughter beside her.

"Mr. Rummel can surely help you enjoy the dancing as well as—as anyone else, dear child, I fancy, if," she continued after a slight questioning pause at which she looked oddly at the girl, "if you will insist on going."

The young man at the gate bowed, and in a manner which would have done honor to a Chesterfield said "Thank you, Mrs. Wilkes."

To herself the little lady smiled, then sighed slightly. The indiscretions of her dear papa's youth in attending such places (she omitted her own part therein) seemed hereditary in Elizabeth. Aloud she advised the latter to run in and get a fine Paisley shawl of her own hanging in the hall.

"The night will be cool," she admonished, and to the youth at the gate: "Elizabeth had intended accompanying her papa to town, but as he prefers to walk she changed her mind at the last moment. But wasn't the intent fortunate? It would save her dressing. And Mr. Rummel could run to the stable and stop Gawan's helper, Jimmie,

from hitching—no, unhitching—” the flurried lady amended with a smile as sweet as the miniature engraving on the upper left corner of certain notes her husband had signed, said engravings bearing the legend: “Amos Rummel, President First National Bank of Colville, Pennsylvania.” It wasn’t far, of course, but Mr. Rummel should drive her over, as the dear child would be tired with dancing ere the night was out.

And of course Mr. Rummel ran, and, finding the horses hitched and all ready to hand, brought them out and fastened them, while at the little lady’s smiling suggestion he went in to wait and tell her all about his dear mamma’s recent indisposition and the trouble that had caused her to discharge the rebellious Esther. For despite the fact that Elizabeth had been, apparently, ready for any function there were still a few little touches left incomplete. No hat was necessary, but the fine shawl her mother had recommended would be very appropriate for the fair shoulders as Mr. Rummel smilingly arranged it.

Thus they walked down to the gate, where he helped her into the carriage, and, while she patted the soft, clinging dress folds into place, coyly suggested that he climb in beside her. Of course, where would he sit but beside her? She didn’t care to drive even if she had taken the front seat.

So with much laughter over nothing in particular the vehicle rolled off along the road to the west—the grove being in the other direction. It was a good mile or two further that way, but what is a mile with good horses, a warm, sensuous evening, the zest of Youth and a pretty girl beside you? Forsooth, Roadmaster Time, make your mile to Collson’s Grove this evening exactly seventeen thousand yards long!

CHAPTER XI.

A VISITOR AT COLLSON'S BATCH

An hour or so later an old man sat smoking beneath a pine tree in his yard, smoking and filling and smoking again, his old corn-cob pipe smouldering like the eternal fires of Krakatoa. On his lap a tiny rat-terrier blinked in her naps, and snapped with sudden awakening when the ears of a big hound came into a too close proximity. Nellie, being of that gender common to other beings stung oftenest by the green monster, was a jealous little midget. While the old man smoked he listened, his "good ear" trained in that direction where stood a grove a facetious Gawan had named for some reason the old lampman could never fathom nor forgive.

Changing occasionally the light wind wafted the mingled sounds away, but, turning, brought with it sounds to which his feet had often stepped in youth. He puffed in silent sympathy with the hugg! hugg! hugg! of the viol, which alone of The Ancient Minstrelsy could penetrate the dulling ears at that distance. Then, when some elated youth would join the hugg with rymthic heel in those intervals between the caller's commands the old man spoke to the terrier:

"That's Eldred, Nellie, I'll bet yer," or "That's Tom—an' Est'er." And once in a long while a still cleverer bit of clogging rode the wind and, whispered the old miner beneath the tree: "That's Young Rummel: the best dancer in the lot!" muttering an addition at which the terrier, remarking even in her sleep the change in her master's voice, rose in fear, her little brown ears twitch-

ing, and, lying flat on her back with paws up in supplication for renewed friendliness—following a trick the old man had learned her—suffered herself to be turned and her shaggy back stroked soothingly, the old man telling her: "I daint mean you, Nellie, but him!"

And as the hour passed the tiny dog cuddled like a brown ball still closer to her aged companion, for the night grew chilly. The wind must have changed for the thudding feet had stopped just as Collson ventured into the house to light a feeble lamp. He came out again murmuring something about there still being "smells of bloomin' skunks an' things," on his shoulders a great coat of antique martial design, for neither he nor Nellie could brook the night air with impunity.

The room he had left was not immaculate by any means. It did indeed smell horribly, but it was of unfragrant cabbage and onions boiled and the effluvia of stove-heated oily clothes. The labor of the lamp-office and the mine is dirty—honest dirt certainly—black and odoriferous. And Esther had not scrubbed her Uncle Collson's batch that day, which was indeed an unusual lapse when she was in Carbonia through the week. For Saturday was the old miner's one day of partial cleanliness. Yet while his thoughts wandered to this delinquency the girl appeared, ghost-like in her white dress with the darkening firmament behind her. She stood in the path a moment without speaking.

Collson exhibited no surprise that Esther should have come so late and dressed so. The old miner's calm was rarely shocked out of its usual groove. Nerves steeled of necessity to forty years of underground tragedy meet the lesser things of life with outward complacency at least. He spoke first.

"Hello, Est'er," he said simply, quietly, "take my cheer."

"I'll stand, you sit down Uncle Enoch," she murmured,

looking not at him but at the grass in the yard, and both lapsed into silence.

Collson reached out his stiff fingers for his still smouldering pipe and set it going. Collson met every big and little crisis of his life and others near him with tobacco. We have known worse weapons; so had he. He looked at the girl but her head was bent, and his ears weren't acute to occasional sighs.

"What's wrong?" he asked finally.

Esther replied only by swallowing hard.

"What's afoot?" Collson persisted.

The girl still choked back something in her throat while Collson awaited her pleasure without further urging.

"I had a little trouble at the grove, that's all," she said, offering no explanation of her other delinquency.

The old man looked at her closely, doubtfully, without speaking.

"I did, really, Uncle Enoch," she replied, impetuously insistent against the doubt she saw in his eyes.

"With Tom?"

"No, with Amos Rummel," she stammered.

Collson laid aside the pipe. "Ugh," he grunted, "what's this about? Daint the byes take your part? Wha'd he do? not hit *you*!"

"Oh, no, just catch him hittin' me," Esther said savagely, perplexed to explain lucidly. "Only Tom was there, an'—an' he wasn't with me—then—only Amos," she stammered fearfully, desiring to explain to that one of all Carbonia who loved her best, if we except Tom Morris, whose love was different but equally intense. "I—I had somethin' I had to tell him an' ask him what he was—ask him about," she forced the words rapidly, "an' he laughed in my face an' asked me to go an' dance with *him*! I smashed him one in the face instead. Tom was close but I wouldn't let him interfere nor come home with me."

He had. Not far behind her he had watched her enter Collson's gate. Then through the field he went home.

As she entered Esther's voice weakened with the proximity of tears that would not much longer be denied. It was with a struggle she said:

"Eldred was goin' to be there but I heard there was somethin' up at *Th' Effie*—a man hurt very bad. Rummel was with Miss Wilkes."

The old miner was all interest in a moment. In the other premise information had but confirmed suspicion, and he immediately switched it into a pigeon-hole of his mind, to be referred to later. He felt instinctively he had not heard the last of it. But this accident, that was instant.

"A man's binn hurt, then? Did you hear as who it was, Est'er? One of the day-men?"

Esther shook hear head abstractedly. "I didn't hear," she replied. She had slipped silently to the grass, still head bowed, and her fingers twisted a fold of her dress until it tore. The old man smoked on, awaiting her solution complete as she had given it in part, apprehensive of greater aggravation than mere repugnance to the young man she had struck. But insofar as Esther was concerned he was doomed to never hear the story from her lips. She twisted the subject as she twisted her dress, telling him that that wasn't what she had come in for.

"I'm going away—after a while—but I've arranged with Margie Thomas to clean up Saturdays for you until her an' Farley's married."

"Goin' away!" he repeated, the tremor in his voice unusual for Collson. "Well?" he questioned largely in that monosyllabic, his old teeth grinding hard on the reed stem between them. The old miner-heart was too tender to wound the girl before him by saying that which he would have said otherwise.

In the pause imposed by herself Esther had risen and

strode toward the picket gate. In the village homes lights were now shining. They seemed like stars through the now welling tears, but not of hope. Outwardly she did not cry, but she knew she would if she stayed a minute longer.

"I—I—can't tell you tonight," she turned at the gate, "but I'll come up tomorrow, maybe. I'm stayin' at Aunt Mary MacDonald's tonight," the old man heard her say as she went quickly through the gate, almost as ghost-like as she had entered. He followed her to the road, and stood there until she reached the first house in the row, then he went in.

Why Esther did not go to Collson's the next day, and why she never told her trouble in its entirety to that one of us all who was her best and most faithful friend as well as a relative, remains for us one of the unfathomable problems of woman's psychology.

CHAPTER XII.

ADDING INSULT TO INJURY

In Collson's Grove incidents expected and unexpected were transpiring, tending toward the usual crisis in such cases. In this particular instance it disrupted the affair almost before it was well started. Farley, by virtue of several more drinks of fiery "rot-gut" had gone maniac-mad: a splendid subject for an immediate discourse on prohibition and a specialist *in mania a potu* on the morrow.

Filled with false energy furnished at Maloney's, loudly the ungentle, nick-named "Duck," threatened to wipe the earth with every male present from the village, with particular emphasis on anything suffering under the burden of such ill-starred names as Wilkes and Morris. Twice they removed him and twice he returned and, the last time, probably because of Amos Rummel's helping in forcing him from the platform because of vulgarity, the Carbonian set upon him. Someone suggested that someone else run for Constable Collson.

In the meantime the fiddlers fiddled and the dancers danced while Rummel and Farley reached the road-edge, the former evading, Elizabeth following at a safe distance, urging her escort to return home with her while even then the matter took a more vicious turn. Rummel had tried persuasion which only increased the miner's rage, and the thudding of men's feet on the hollow wood floor caused the waste of Farley's words on the other. But they had slowly reached the road. There came a lull in the dancing and an expansiveness in Farley's vocabulary created chiefly by the fumes of alcohol. In

the temporary quiet he fairly shrieked a vehement insinuation already become, in Carbonia, common gossip. Our village was ahead of Marconi in wireless transmission of news.

Hitherto Miss Wilkes's escort had laughed the fellow's antics away from all seriousness, as, in fact, he did look rather comical with his derby tilted over his left eye, his right arm drawn back and his left thrust forward, posed for the anticipated onslaught in exactitude with the principles of "the noble art." But this S O S called all the color from his antagonist's face.

"What did he say?" whispered Elizabeth, timidly clutching at Rummel's arm.

"A damned lie," retorted her perturbed companion, "and I haven't finished with him yet."

Therefore they slugged, gouged, tore at each other like a pair of fighting dogs, yet even to an apprentice in the "art" it soon became apparent that Amos was going to have the tussle of his life proving himself innocent in that way. Inured to daily hardship, and having the agility characteristic of the miner between twenty and thirty, and an unusual strength and stamina, Farley had an advantage despite the uncertainty of his legs, at first. As he fought he gained steadiness and strength, while Rummel weakened.

Also the miner grew blood-mad: the killing instinct of the man primordial surged into him with the rising heat and passion. Like a mad dog he frothed at the mouth, the semi-idiotic drunken stare, the leer and aimless gymnastics, changed to the fierceness of a goaded bull. One solicitous young gentleman bearing the euphonious name of Clifford Adams, whose hat, unlike Farley's, still remained *a la mode* Carbonia, suggested from somewhere near his left eyebrow that:

"Youns girls had better skedaddle, as there's goin' to be a genuwine scrap here in lessen two minutes, an'

some fur a-flyin'," and true to the solicitous young gentleman's prophecy something approximating fur or feathers did fly in less than two seconds.

There came rolling over past the little group of now thoroughly excited women whose curiosity had impelled them to the scene, a whirling, cursing ball of mixed-up humanity, which sent them and their curiosity flying to a safer spot, all except Elizabeth and Margaret Thomas. Defiant to the last these two, being most concerned for the combatants, remained near, Elizabeth backing toward a tree the more easily to slip out of the way if necessary. Margaret evidenced no animosity toward the other girl; instead she spoke quietly aside to her of something which brought from Elizabeth the hope that if that were true she "hoped Farley would give him a good trouncing."

But the miner's mind wasn't altogether sure of that. He wasn't acutely aware of the fact that a few minutes longer and Rummel would be done. To Farley he seemed to be holding out to a finish, and that not his own. But a knife! Someone near the tree screamed and the miner's adversary incontinently fled.

In blind rage Farley leaped like a painted Indian, the knife describing circles unpleasantly near the fright-stricken girl who alone remained near the tree. What might have followed is problematical: what did actually occur is a matter of local history, and commenced at the moment Farley's knife poised upward to strike anything in his way. Behind him the line suddenly parted, a fist went up viciously, and the steel flew in a glittering arc covering several yards in its descent.

"Morris!" somebody shouted. Faces were almost indistinguishable where the crowd stood. The crowd went nearer as the murmur rose: "It's *The Effie's* foreman!"

The words acted like magic on Farley and the men who now held him. Morris caught sight of the woman beside the tree and made a step forward toward her, when

the line of men broke and dropped into the general crowd apparently with the tacit consent to let the two men settle their own difficulties now the knife was gone. And, as though the opportunity had long been expected and desired, Farley wrenched himself loose from the last man essaying a feeble attempt to deter him, and rushed on Morris from the back with such impact that the foreman fell and received a vicious kick before he could rise.

In the black shadows a woman, also, almost fell and tried to scream but the effort died in her throat. She heard the labored breath of the struggling men and saw a loose, limp, arm hanging by Morris's side when for the second or third time he rose from a fall.

"Help him, you cowards!" she called, "he's fighting with one arm, don't you see?"

Nobody interfered, and a moment later she saw Farley go violently to the grass on the road-side, and Morris straighten with a painfully-drawn look in his eyes. In the semi-dark she might have imagined that, but to her it seemed real, and also the idea that the look was directed at her. And again she appealed to the men to part them, but several girls were doing the same thing at the same time and being generally laughed at for their pains. Those nearest said they'd see both men got fair play. "They're pretty evenly matched," seemed to be the general opinion, not taking into account that one arm was fighting two.

Farley had kicked the new enemy on the muscle-ball with a mule's power, and, sober enough now to see his advantage, tried desperately to get hold of the uninjured arm. At length he got it. While Morris writhed to disengage himself—his only chance—Farley shouted to someone in the circle:

"I've got him, Cliff! I've got the son-of-a_____!"

Who "Cliff" was Elizabeth had no time to wonder, for another pugilistically-inclined gentleman was thrust sav-

agely where he belonged. The miner loves a square deal in work or play, and this was of the latter category to their primitive perception. He came back almost immediately, and, dancing up and down as near as the spectators would let him, urged:

"You kin lick him better'n the mule, Ducky; give him hell!" which is proof that when drink is in sense goes out. Clifford Adams was also a driver at the big mine, but the possibilities of a discharge failed to outweigh his eagerness to see his erstwhile companion of the mule-barn get the best of the bout.

Time and again the girl standing limp beside the tree continued her effort to have the men part them. Some looked at her in pity, some in contempt, wondering why anyone should be there to whom such an affair wasn't joyously thrilling. The unanimous agreement was to let them fight until one or the other gave up, and in the meantime the fiercely-palpitating heart of the girl most interested was using almost the last bit of energy in her body. She remained for sometime an unwilling spectator, asking again and again why in God's name they allowed such brutality to continue, and why didn't someone get the constable. She heard them breathe like broken bellows, and leap, fall, plunge, singly and together.

Indistinctly she occasionally got a glimpse of Morris when the line before her moved to better advantage, and could still discern that all his efforts were defensive. His whole aim seemed to center on keeping Farley from getting hold of the arm he could use, and to that end when occasion offered hurled the big miner like a log to the ground. But unlike a log Farley rebounded and went at it again, aiming blow and kick, and, sometimes it seemed, doing both simultaneously so close were they together. He was completely sober now.

And thus they struggled, for an interminable period it seemed to the almost swooning woman looking on. Their

breath coughed in their throats, the rancor in each man's heart now out of all proportion to the original cause. Both were savages now and having only the instinct of self-preservation.

In the end the sight became unendurable for Miss Wilkes, and with desperate effort she sought the pavilion for someone she knew. Margaret was there weeping, and on the other side Rummel sat sullenly wiping blood from a gash in his forehead. And while out of a broad sympathy for all suffering Elizabeth pitied him, too, the matter at the road adjusted itself in a sudden shock Farley received in one of his falls, and the chance of a second between falling and rising being taken. Like a tiger Morris pounced: his unhurt hand tightening on the other's neck.

Thus they were when an old man and a big hound forced their way through the crowd. Evidently the man was of some authority, as witness the great coat bristling with brass buttons, and a sawed-off musket of terrible aspect and mild efficiency, and the rusty handcuffs to do their part. Collson's speed was slower in reaching the point of action than his courage, which in so aged a man was great. Also he had somehow misplaced his old-fashioned revolver, which caused some delay. He compromised on the weapon aforesaid and the dog, the latter the more deadly in a scrimmage.

The ensemble was sufficient in looks alone to quell the incipient riot his informant had led him to believe existed in the grove. But Collson had been peace officer too long in Carbonia to take needless chances. He did lay the musket on the ground, but he put the "nippers" on Farley, relieving Morris and Pete of taking immediate care of him. The old dog, whose fearful howls were said to indicate part blood-hound, was always an efficient aide in such matters, even moreso than the "bored out" old musket or the wonderful cap-revolver that stood still

when it should have turned and revolved when it should have stood still. The gun he had brought was loaded with sparrow-shot, but it was capless, and the cap-box he himself had hidden to forestall Bobbie Burns in his frequent surreptitious visits to the batch. In his hurry he had forgotten the cap, but the effect was just as good.

The constable shouted to a man who had left the group and started toward the platform. "Come along wi' me, Eldred," he urged as the crowd fell back, murmuring because the free show was over and the dance broken up. Most of the young women had gone home. "This young buck might be too much for me further on."

Morris went reluctantly. He glanced around vainly for the girl he had seen beside the tree, and assumed she, too, had gone home. Then he turned to aid Collson.

Many others went along, mostly boys, one of them, because of relationship, clutching the constable's coat as the procession moved down the road. On his right Pete padded solemnly, receiving an occasional twist on his long ears. Bobbie Burns enjoyed hearing the assistant policeman howl.

They turned in an opposite direction from the village. The last prisoner Collson had locked in Maloney's horse-stable, and by virtue of past performances at the saloon-bar he had, as our untutored village youth termed it, "skipped." It was an "accident" of course. Collson forgot to fasten the hay-loft door.

"Where you goin' ter put him, Uncle Enoch?" piped Bobbie Burns; "you ain't got no jail—n-e-o-w!"

"Squire Tirrel has one good ernuff till to-morrer," the constable replied, quite undisturbed by the prospect.

"Oh, the barn?" prompted the freckled Bobbie, dropping back with Collson, who found it hard to keep up with Morris and his prisoner. Farley's hands were fastened on himself alone, his manner sullen, his tongue silent. His recent antagonist evidently depended on his

legs to catch him if he broke away. In more desperate cases Collson had been known to fasten his own coal-scarred wrist to his much more burly prisoners, and walk thus to the standard calaboose at Colville.

"The barn, Uncle Enoch?" persisted Bobbie again, hotching nervously in mingled curiosity and desire to be near the head of the procession at the same time. Collson stopped to fill his pipe before answering:

"No, laddie, that ain't safe-keepin'; but Tirrel's old silo is."

And into the village Squire's small abandoned silo went the prisoner that night sober. They removed him sometime next day more intoxicated than he had been the night before. Pools of fermented ancient green-corn-juice had confounded The Law in this premise.

CHAPTER XIII.

A KISS FOR NELLIE BUT NONE FOR PETE

Next morning Eldred Morris donned his working clothes and prepared to go over to the mine. He felt sore all over, but not otherwise much worse for the fracas at the grove. It was Sunday, but the possibilities of the night demanded that he pay a visit if only for a few minutes. Pumps broke, fans stopped, something went wrong in the engine-rooms or the shaft, sometimes. And of a certainty there was, at such a mine as *The Effie*, always men to be set at certain work that could not well be done through the week.

He had risen last, and Emily Morris placed before him and Tom a substantial breakfast of fried potatoes, beef-steak and gravy, poached eggs and rolled oats with milk, not to mention the completion of the menu in the form of bananas, bread and coffee. Our men live well while they can, starve when they must. Their work demands much body-fuel, and when possible they get it.

"How's your arm, my boy?" his mother asked solicitously, placing beside his chair a pair of knee-high, tan-colored-leather shoes, having heavy soles and raw-hide laces, and over the chair-back a heavy blue flannel shirt having on it plenty of grease and clay-stains as well as a collar. The sleeves were purposely shorn at the elbows to give a greater freedom of movement.

"Oh, it's better this morning, mother," Eldred replied, bolting almost a complete egg at one mouthful. Tom was doing likewise but saying nothing. The younger son looked decidedly depressed this morning. "That witch-hazel you put on helped it some."

For some time no one spoke further. Both men ate rapidly, their mother slowly. They were almost through before she was well started. John Morris came into the room and Eldred rose, pushing forward his chair.

"Here's a chair, dad," he said; "I'm through."

John Morris usually took a constitutional around The Four Rows as a prelude to breakfast on Sunday morning. He was generally first up. Taking the chair vacated by his son he sat down as he said quite casually:

"Eldred, I heard up the blocks Rossi died at three o'clock this mornin'." He gave this information merely as a matter of course, and without raising or lowering his voice or turning from his plate.

Emily Morris turned from the stove where she had gone to get the coffee-pot. She had stirred the coals first, and the lifter was still in her hand. All color left her cheeks as she went over to the wall and sat down. News of death at the mine somehow always presaged in her mind the same fate ultimately for her own.

"Poor Mrs. Rossi and all those children," she said, looking through the open door toward the most recently built row of houses, in one of which Mrs. Rossi lived. The "cousins" of our Dominics and Tonis were, with their families, now numerous enough to fill "dago row." "What'll they do now, I wonder," she questioned as she had always done in the great sympathy of a greater all-mothering heart for all the multitudinous suffering women and children of this tragic industry. None of the men answered while Mrs. Morris busied her agitated hands in re-arranging the contents of a basket she had, at her eldest son's instigation, prepared to send over to the widowed woman. Mrs. Rossi was in a delicate situation; the crisis was expected at any moment, and, when the news came that her husband was injured and sent to the hospital, Emily Morris and Eldred had formed a committee of two to extend a little practical sympathy in

the form of certain delicacies and little dresses Emily Morris would never need again, and Mrs. Rossi would very soon, apparently. She placed a white towel over it as Eldred spoke:

"I thought he wouldn't last to get there," said he, filling his Sunday meerschaum preparatory for a smoke while crossing the fields. "His chest was caved in completely when I got to him."

Tom was standing by the door, legs crossed, eyes directed toward MacDonald's porch.

"Before long the union'll have compensation to care for all them cases, Emmy," John Morris offered as a dilatory answer to her question. Eldred turned at the door.

"Not until Public Opinion is roused sufficiently, dad," he differed. "It'll have to come through the Legislature, when it does come, and the union is too busy unionizing to bother with politics much. They'd gain that point and many another that seems to trouble them much sooner, I fancy, if they'd use the same effort to lay the matter in all its detail before the people by writing to newspapers and their representatives in Harrisburg that they use in cussin' the operators. The Public don't wont injustice to continue toward the workmen let alone helpless little children and women, dad, any more than the union does," he concluded rather vehemently, meanwhile slipping something into his mother's hand.

Emily Morris looked at it, then, surprised, asked: "All of this, Eldred?"

He nodded. "They'll need it and a lot more to bury him," he replied laconically, "or the County will."

Tom walked with him some distance, then turned toward MacDonald's. The foreman went on alone past Collson's. The blinds were not down, for there were none, but evidently the three occupants were asleep. Peace-preserved and Peace-disturber were equally oblivious to the cares of Carbonia, Collson in his own mussy

bed and Farley drunker than ever in Tirrel's empty silo. Noting this Morris turned abruptly into a path leading through a meadow and thence through a coppice.

It was a lovely morning, just such as one sees sometimes in our coal country, every breath fragrant with the perfume of early Autumn leaf and flower, of fern and swinging wild-grape vine. The frosts were not yet come. Here and there Eldred Morris's heavy mine shoes crushed ripened may-apples edging the path as, passing from shadow to shadow the great arc-light of the heavens threw alternating radiance across the miner's way.

To make the traveling easier the mine employees on their way to work had broken and cut at projecting twigs until the passage literally formed a leafy tunnel. Yet even then when a group went together beneath this vernal vault the traveling—in the case of the miners—was apt to be accompanied by much profanity as twig after twig, still unbroken, bent back from the person in front and sharply slapped the one in the rear.

But Eldred Morris was alone. The morning smoke of the village lay quite some distance behind him in the slight valley, and he was near Wilkes's. Perhaps unconsciously, perhaps purposely, he had chosen this path, although somewhat the longest from Morris's, to reach the mine. By passing that way he might have hoped to see Elizabeth, and, be his intent what it may, he did.

Near the end of the coppice they came face to face. To escape the dew the girl, all unconscious of any male's presence, held her skirt and petticoat well toward her knees, with one hand clutching them in front. In the other she carried a large basket filled with something Eldred could only guess at.

Perhaps there is such a thing as physic love-waves; perhaps it was because Elizabeth was young; perhaps a little of all mixed with the aroma of wood and field, and scarcely a real care in all the world, that wreathed the

rosy cheeks and still rosier lips with smiles; perhaps the spiritual warmth—the heavenly glow—that lights both soul and features over the contemplation of being on a mission of mercy to the unfortunate and suffering. Be that as it may the soul of the young woman on that beautiful late-summer morning was illumed, and the reflection showed in the red lips parted with a smile, when the blue eyes startled at the sudden proximity of the dark ones.

“You, Eldred!” she exclaimed, dropping her skirts and blushing furiously.

“You’re out early?” he questioned.

“I want to take this to Mrs. —— what is it?” addressing the question to herself, and, following Morris’s action, sat on a fallen tree trunk lying parallel with the path. Her basket she set between them. The young man helped her out.

“Mrs. Rossi,” he suggested, “whose man was killed yesterday?” knocking the ashes from his pipe and putting it in a velvet-lined case. If Morris had one extravagance it was this, although obviously smoking was confined to the surface.

“Yes,” Elizabeth responded, “but we didn’t know he was killed. Papa heard at the mine he was merely injured and taken to the hospital.”

The young foreman looked stolidly at the ground. “He was; he died this morning in Pittsburg. I sent him there—about the time I should have been cleaned up and at your place,” he added meaningfully, looking at the coloring face of the girl. Elizabeth’s eyes dropped. “I knew he couldn’t live—or rather I thought he couldn’t—when I helped remove him from beneath the slate, but there’s always a possibility of such cases living, you know, if they can be gotten to the hospital in time. Some day there’ll be scores of lives saved, that are now lost, by having means of treating them right close.”*

*Later events have fully justified Eldred Morris’s assertion: see reports of First-Aid Corps.

"But yourself, Eldred?" she interrupted irrelevantly, looking down at his hand which bore no sign of injury.

He cast all inquiry aside by a sullen: "Oh, I'm alright, only a little sore." Where or why he failed to specify, for the last word of his sentence has a psychological as well as physical definition in Carbonia's colloquialism. "The mine seems to be hoodooed lately," he added, reverting to the subject which had crowded out almost every other thought since the conversation at home, "but it's not any different than I might have expected."

Elizabeth pulled apart the fronds of a fern brushing her dress, while Morris pulled out a watch, opened it, and put it back without being any wiser as to the time. Apparently the girl was in no hurry. She spoke quietly, slowly, her eyes interrogating his own.

"Idealism dies hard, doesn't it, Eldred?" the blue eyes smiled into the dark ones understandingly.

Morris nodded thoughtfully as he set the basket on the path and moved over somewhat, simply of course to escape a direct sunbeam that had found his face and missed Elizabeth's in its passage through the green, fluttering, leaves.

"I've had more than one ideal smashed lately." Then, without lifting his head to remark the effect of that assertion, he added: "But a man raised in the mine ought to know that no foreman's care will avoid all accidents. Coal mining's a pretty harsh proposition anywhere; worse where there's gas, coal-dust and slate as here—harder on the women and children, though, than the men," he again repeated in substance the conversation at home.

"But it mustn't be any worse than it is if *we* can help it," Elizabeth voiced her opinion optimistically, as is ever the way of unsophisticated Youth in any premise. She bent to move out of the sun's rays.

"We can't, only temporarily," he said, "under present

conditions," and spoke no more, for Elizabeth switched the conversation to another channel. She spoke of the affair at the dance, but avoided mention of why she was there with another, and the man, grasping the embarrassment, humored her secret. He told her where he and Collson had taken Farley, and, while avoiding mention of Rummel directly, he upset his own equipoise and grated on the girl's sensibilities by telling briefly, but in such wise, Collson's story of the dogs, that she sensed the point he desired to carry.

Not at first, however, for Elizabeth laughed quietly as he repeated the story, but grew suspiciously serious when he iterated Collson's assertion that "Some humans weren't any better than dogs in that respect." When he hurried on to the old miner's suggestion that he get mud-balls for artillery against the little dog, and rocks for the big one, the good humor had returned and the girl's eyes were as one crying, and her hands held her sides. Doubtless her acute imagination filled in all the detail necessary to complete the picture, while the man telling it saw only what lay before him and Collson's words.

"Droll old lampman," she said, "and still droller Eldred," looking deep into eyes she had not yet understood. Nor was she yet to understand. His next words set her back.

"Not droll," he differed; "I would say para—— what is it?"

"Parabolic," she added readily, looking at him doubtfully, beginning to wonder if he would have the temerity to go further. It seemed he would, doing so not as she understood: to question her actions: but rather to direct them to what she might have found a better way. He loved her sweet face and winsome, if variant, disposition too well to let a trifling convention stand in the way, and, in a certain sense, was prepared to stand the consequences. His daily life, as is that of all good mine of-

ficials, young or old, is made up of suggestion for betterment, and command having the same purpose, only that there he dealt with nearly three hundred men and here with a single representative of the other sex. He had not learned that one woman is sometimes harder to control than a thousand men. If his men failed to heed his command, or contemptuously ignored his suggestion, out with them! Through Chaos to Method ran a path more or less clear to discerning eyes, and his eyes were perhaps of any in our midst the better fitted to this purpose, else he would not at that age have been what he was. If disobedience or stubbornness proved a stumbling block in that path remove it. That was the way of the mine. It was his way now.

Generally speaking the mine foreman is a poor dissembler, and Eldred Morris showed perhaps too plainly that his love for Elizabeth ran deep as all such men's passions do. The girl now sitting very close to him had never sounded its full depth, and just when she might have done so he said what he said and changed it all. Her face grew a shade whiter than her dress. Elizabeth knew well enough now what he meant, but for some reason preferred that he should bare his mind more completely.

Her fingers moved over the now bare fern stem as she said tremulously: "I don't—I don't quite understand you," freezing in her conscious dignity. But adamant does not freeze.

Eldred Morris had chosen the way deliberately. "I didn't tell the story because of its funniness."

She replied tartly: "So you said," but her face was averted and her voice quavered. "I beg your pardon for misunderstanding you, and thank you *ever* so much for your good intentions, Mr. Morris." But the acrimony put into the last sentence killed any hope that might have

lingered in the young man's mind that his suggestion would meet with a modicum of approval in that quarter.

To make amends he quickly caught her hands and held them awhile despite her struggles, but, finding her determined to resist any effort at conciliation he loosed them and stood up beside her, his hands in his blouse pockets, hers in her lap, his eyes on the mass of hair blown gently by the warm wind. The eyes of the girl were set on a bouquet of asters which a movement of the napkin disclosed at her feet.

For a moment neither broke the silence. On a bough nearby a coy canary warbled, and the distant whirr of the steel fan-blades above *The Effie* drooned like a bee-swarm humming. The woman's head was bent slightly forward, showing a skin white and pink, and a wealth of hair above it starting like yellow down and ending in a mound of glistening threads like gold in the shimmering sunlight. To the man's nostrils came the faintest hint of redolence like the breath of a full-blown tuberose weakened appreciably by the passing breeze.

As it had not beat when fastened in a living tomb with miners dead and near dead the heart of the man ran riot, and forced from his lips words he had not thought himself capable of uttering in supplication for the favor of any earthly being. And when he had thus bared his heart the best of the girl wanted to look up and smile into his eyes with full forgiveness and appreciation, but she did that which conflicted with her desire instead.

"I didn't stop here, Mr. Morris, to have you find fault with *my* actions. I thought——."

"Then, perhaps, you won't find fault with mine," he said rapidly, and as quickly bent and kissed her on her cheek, then her lips, before the blows aimed at him made him desist. "I'm going to be hanged," he smiled defiantly at her, she standing now in the center of the path, her blue eyes unflinching, her cheeks, where she

dabbed at them with a handkerchief, red as the lips she did not dab at all, and he unmoved as yet, "and it might as well be for the hound as for the tail alone," following which he good-naturedly added to the measure before she could grasp the basket and move, for he had purposely stood before it.

"If you do that again," she said, "I'll—I'll—shriek . . ."

"Don't," he whispered, going still a little nearer, and she as certainly moving back, "don't. It's not lady-like on—Sunday."

"You're a brute," she flung back, and still good-naturedly he told her nay: that the dogs obviously were, and as he had as yet kissed only for poor Nellie he would be pleased also to kiss for Pete.

Instead he moved forward toward the way he was heading when he met her, seeing that she was intensely earnest and really mad about it—now. All the softness he had felt when he thought her actions just a bit of girlish by-play vanished, and his face took on the color of hers and his lips set, but there was a light deep in his eyes that burned too fiercely to be put out entirely by a passing breeze. Yet she, determined it should go out, blew deliberately on it as she lifted her basket and turned in the opposite direction, yet looking at the ground as she said:

"*Your* attentions, Mr. Morris, will be better confined to Margaret Thomas or some girl in The Rows in future. It would be more appropriate to the setting." This she said slowly, with enunciation on each word, knowing full well its hurtful meaning and implication that circumstances were not now the same as when they were both miners' children. "Perhaps she'll take that from you, I won't!"

And thus fully weighing the girl's reference to an act of kindness she had evidently nursed into sinister mean-

ing, and also to an artificially-created social abyss which money and position ultimately create, even in mining life, between friends starting on a common level, Eldred Morris's lips moved in inarticulate chagrin and mortification. Evidently Elizabeth was now the calmer of the two, and found it possible to widen the wound she had already made. She was in that feminine frame of mind when the tongue utters the cruelest words to that one of all the world most dear. She wanted him to speak again and give her time to regain her normal attitude, and then to turn back and put his strong arms around her and drive all the anger away, and she did not want to say what she said and yet malevolently it followed the man moving along the path.

"I'll send you a note, Mr. Morris, when I desire your company again . . ." And he, with one sentence building a wall he did not want between them, retorted prophetically:

"You'll bring it as well as write it, Elizabeth, before we meet again," which she of course said would never, never be—now that he had thus chosen to go away.

Then he went on and she did not even condescend to turn to see which way he took. He might have gone to the mine or the suggested female charmers in The Rows for all she knew—or cared, which was fully evidenced when for the full distance to the home of the dead miner she tried in vain to stem her tears. Elizabeth's face was suffused and her eyes wet when she reached Mrs. Rossi's.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH FATHER AND SON AGREE

Sometime after the incident in the coppice the foreman of *The Effie* was, by virtue of his official position, prerogativated to do that which gave him the most pleasure of anything recently undertaken at the mine. John Morris was to get a new place, and his son determined to do his best to kill two birds with one stone, so to speak, by seeing that the new place should be so much better than the old that it would lend an additional inducement to John Morris to let up on his agitating. Thus does the mental uplift of night-study in our chiefest university of mining in the end tend to help financially and otherwise others besides the assiduous student himself. Blood is thicker than water even among us, and Eldred Morris had two duties to fulfill that day: one to his employer and one to his parent.

Usually he deputed this service to his firebosses, of whom there were several now, men older than he, and having families, but like many others not yet possessed of the technical knowledge necessary to gain the higher certificate and the higher pay. This chamber he must see himself, and with John Morris he went thither in an empty coal car. One of the essentials of this place he desired should be the possibility of working there with open light. The faint glimmer of a safety lamp as compared with a "naked light"—or oil torch—bears about the same ratio in comfort as a candle to an electric bulb.

He found it quite as good as MacDonald had said, coal

thick, floor dry and slate thin. It was on the same circuit as the "free turn" entries, but unlike them was free of gas transpiration. Having looked it over carefully Eldred Morris sat down on a heap of fine slack left by the former workman. John Morris busied himself with his tools.

"There's only one bad thing about this place, and many another in *The Effie*, dad," the younger man said as he held up his testing lamp. His father looked through the semi-dark, wondering. He had seen no bad points. "It's less than five hundred yards from Number Ten and that entry is full of gas, and on the same air."

The miner laughed incredulously.

"There'll be no open lights in gas mines after a few more explosions waken the people up," the idealist theorized.

"Tut, tut, boy," John Morris assured, "don't let that worry you. There's lots o' things you need to worry about—an' me—" he added meaningfully, and looking closely at Eldred, "as is more likely to happen than yer dad to be killed—here." But evidently the possibilities, remote as he conceived them to be, suggested care in another direction. He lifted his pick and tapped gently on the roof above him, while with his other hand he held the naked light. This precaution frequently occurs to the miner after he has been sitting under possibly instantaneous death for some time, if the roof doesn't notify him of his carelessness first.

"But I do care," persisted the foreman, "although as it is at present I'm powerless to change it without a strike right off the bat—men and company both. And as long as other mines nearby are being worked that way, and this being about the best place in the pit, I don't know that you'll be in any worse danger than elsewhere where it isn't as good."

John Morris sat on the pit-post he had found for a

seat. The opportunity to "roast" the company a bit was too good to pass unnoticed. "True enough, sonny, true enough; but as long as the company finds it to their advantage to let the drivers an' day-men use open lights because they can get more work done in a shift, the diggers is bound to feel the same way as works by the ton, an' if anythin' happens the pot can't call the kettle black, even if the fat, as represented by the children an' wimmen folks, does tumble into the fire in the squabble."

"There's truth in that," the foreman lifted his heavy lamp from the floor and concentrated his gaze on it, "and it's because the innocent have to suffer more than the guilty, and because the 'doctors' nearly always disagree as to the cause, and on whom to place the responsibility, that I say the causes should be removed when they're known before it does happen. If I had my way there'd be no open lights used either by the company men or the diggers, where there are entries like Number Ten and Eleven throwing enough gas into the air to come dangerously near the popping stage in a Davy, as I found it on this circuit the very day Pietrecco and Strafford and the rest of them were killed. I've often wondered—since the inspectors all seemed to disagree as to the starting point—if that wasn't the cause of that blow-up. And still," after a moment's thought, the foreman resumed, "I don't see how it could be, either, for I made Pietrecco carry a safety lamp that morning, because we had to go round where there was gas before I showed him an open-light rib in Old 13. It's a——."

Foreman Morris ceased soliloquizing to look at his father who was roaring with laughter. "Eldred! Eldred!" he chuckled, "did—you—look—in—all—his—pockets?"

"That's so," the foreman hung his head in thought more than shame, "giving a man a safety lamp in his hand don't avail much if he's carrying open lights on sticks in his pockets, does it? Penning the pig up on

one side only isn't going to keep him in if he's bound to find trouble, I guess."

In the heading behind them a train of cars rumbled along, the driver's cap, cocked aslant over one ear of the devil-may-care youth driving the mule, bearing a torch with a murky half-kerosene-half-miner's-oil flame half a foot high. In the open spaces to the right and left the echoes of the rumbling train mingled with the fluent strain of a lip-pursed whistle, and an occasional unprintable admonishment to the mule to move faster. As the noise died away in the dark distance John Morris rose to get a drink of cold, unsugared, tea from his pail, and, setting the top back, wiped his lips and moustache with the back of a hairy, coal-dust-covered hand. He referred to the previous conversation:

"Men ain't the only ones in that respect, Eldred," switching the matter to that seldom discussed at home. "If a man or a woman's a cripple above their shoulders after twenty or twenty-five it's a pritty hard place to make crutches to fit."

For a moment Eldred Morris's thoughts were elsewhere. He caught but a vague impression of his father's meaning, and at first thought the allusion to his mother's having worried herself ill. Emily Morris had taken to her bed that morning. Then it flashed across his mind that the scene in the coppice might have somehow reached his parents, despite the fact that he had said nothing about it. And for a while neither man spoke—the younger looking questioningly at the elder before John Morris explained:

"I was thinkin' of the trouble your brother's goin' to bring on your mother an' me unless—" he turned the trend suddenly. "You p'rhaps don't know as your mother an' Esther's mother was well acquainted when they was young wimmen, an' that Aholah Collson, she was named then, didn't have the best of reputations?"

"Well, dad, what has that to do with Esther?" came sharply.

"Nothin'," was the equally sharp reply, "only as the bad points is sometimes handed on as well as the good uns, an' the man as had, in the end, to dig coal to keep Esther wasn't her daddy accordin' to all accounts."

"Well, what Esther's mother did has nothing to do with Tom—nor us."

"No, but what the girl's doin' herself has."

Still baffled by his parent's equivocal assertions Eldred remained silent, not caring to ask more questions until sure of his ground. His own manliness and a strong reluctance to discuss the private affairs of others had impelled him to refuse to accept as fact all he had heard lately, but he had never known his father to take hearsay as truth until proven in such matters, despite his exagerations as an incorrigible unionizer, nor yet to take verity at par and retail it at a profit. He was first to break the heavy silence, however.

"Are you sure, dad, it isn't mother's reluctance she's always shown regarding Tom going with Esther, or me, for that matter with—that is," the foreman colored a little beneath the coal-dust—"her reluctance to lose us to some other woman that started this?"

"Yes, my boy, I'm sure it ain't," his father replied, ambiguous still, rubbing his fingers along the spout of his lamp until it glistened like silver, "although it's natural for your mother to feel that way even if the young woman was a angel from heaven, which none of 'em don't happen to be by a few miles, more or less, only when they'n courtin' and' afraid they might lose the feller," the miner chuckled. "They all feelin' that way at first—at least my mother did towards yours. But what we see we see, an' to put it plain, Eldred, I know enough to make *me*, let alone your mother, wish it was different. Rummel should either marry Lizzie Wilkes, as I heard

yesterday he's goin' to, an' leave Esther alone, or——.”

John Morris stopped suddenly in his explanation to pick up the lighted testing-lamp which had slipped from his son's fingers. He could not see the change of color, but he possibly remarked the tremor in the fingers which took the lamp out of his own. The foreman hooked it in his belt for fear of making a fool of himself a second time. The momentary loss of mental control was as mortifying as it was unusual to one accustomed now to the weightier things of life—affairs involving the future of thousands, the lives of hundreds, including himself and the men of his own family.

“I can believe what I know, Eldred, boy, an' I know more than I like as the father of the man as might have to daddy her young un . . .”

The miner spoke with the characteristic frankness of his class, calling spade a spade. “But if there's nothin' been done as—as there oughtn't, your mother nor me would have no objection to Esther if she keeps away from Rummel in future, for I'm sure I don't know a girl as I like better only for—well—monkeyin' with buzz-saws once in a while we might say,” John Morris chuckled with a knowing glance at his son. “They all seemin' to like to try their hand at that, though, when her age.”

“That's no joke either, dad,” Eldred Morris replied, his eyes set on the little light-cone burning brightly in the center of the black circle of wire protecting it, as though its tiny flame illumined pictures his own mind conjured of a certain girl he knew who played with the whirling blade. “From what I see there seems to be a bit of the devil in all women—even the best of them—” he qualified his definition in the specific, and the reader may do the same. Eldred Morris had no doubt at all.

Certain it is the two men's minds in that underground chamber differed only as to objects, the elder recalling the boys' mother and some scraps of conversation the

night before, in which the great heart of Emily Morris was torn between her duty as a Christian toward a poor and more or less defenseless orphan girl, and her duty as that same girl's prospective and probable mother-in-law.

"I reckon there is, Eldred," the miner replied thoughtfully, "I reckon there is; but from what I've seen of a good many of 'em, an' your mother in particular, there's also a good bit more of The Christ-Spirit in 'em than in us men to make it out."

Here for that day at least the matter ended, and Eldred Morris went on into the farther mine, trying, with more or less success, to forget what he had heard. Generally the full-grown men—at their height physically and mentally—who worship at The Carbon Shrine, take labor the more seriously, the mating affair monogamously and as a matter of recreation rather than vocation of a polygamous sort. Necessarily this is a matter strictly of circumstance and environment, of course. Fortunate, too, else not here and there a swinging crepe, a distorted face, but all—in every home greater chances for one to a dozen dead with all the temporary and permanent accompaniments of poverty and anguished minds. Necessarily this is so, else Foreman Morris, Fireboss MacDonald and his contemporaries of the lamp and fiddle, were unfitted to hold each in his hand a hundred lives.

Also we augment it by admitting no man to hold such position until he shall have passed the moon-struck stage of his career.* By the time a miner reach midway to thirty, the years between twenty and twenty-four or five have, with the more serious aspects of our life, refined

*As evidence that our laws are not always based on a determination to be progressive the Author desires to state that in Pennsylvania that most beneficent statute has been revoked. The employer may now designate whom he will for these positions regardless of his age or qualifications.

him of much of Youth's inherent farcical traits. And for the other sex which shares that life we may add, that, speaking generally, when exotic bloom comes on our plant of love "working out" in town is oftener than not at fault. Even as The Greater Light but soothes and gives being to the flitting moth, so does the Artificial Imitation lure it to destruction and turn its gold and silver sheen to charring dust. So did it prove for one of our fairest girls at least.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MEETING IN BILKIN'S HALL

The Effie was in full swing when one morning the following notice, posted where all the miners could see it before entering the cage, broke what promised to be a record run of good luck—or good management. Said the paper:

Gentlemen Your presens are neaded to settel something of speshul importense to this mine at a meeting to be held at Bill Kins hall today at 2 p M promp.

Sined Speshul Commity.

The attendance was more obvious; the concurrence of opinion more lucid. They came, in tens and twenties, until the hall would hold no more. The rest waited more or less patiently outside.

Evidently the decision was already reached: the meeting a mere formality of setting it on record and getting concerted action. Anent this, however, each man was in doubt regarding the whole, hence the subdued and louder whisperings hushed immediately on the appearance on the platform of John Morris, Enoch Collson, and several others of importance in our circle.

Enoch Collson stood up enwrapped in the faded coat with unfaded brass buttons which had long ceased to create curiosity or comment, in his hand a red bandanna, large almost as a small table-cloth.

“Our Local President,” said he, “asks as he be excused from sittin’ as cheerman of this meetin’ as usual,

bein' it has, as you all know, somethin' to do with a pertic'ler member of his fam'ly."

This request was granted and followed by a wave of whispered opinion starting at the platform and ending at the door. Mickey Gawan stood up and suggested that all in favor of Mr. Collson taking John Morris's place would "sinnify by sayin' Hi!" Enoch Collson was unanimously elected, and chose to make known his desire as follows:

"Will Mr. Gawan, Jim Darrel, an' Duck Farley, step up here?" They stepped, Darrel clumsily, Gawan slowly, and the former mule-beater with the ability of an acrobat, and all embarrassed. Certain information conveyed to Eldred Morris regarding the prospective marriage of his late antagonist to Miss Thomas had caused him to relent. He had given him the job of firing the boilers for Darrel, thus relieving him of inhuman opportunity, even as it was reported the winsome Margaret had won him from drink. All three were equally miserable. Micky pulled an indiscriminate moustache almost out by root; Darrel wiped his fat and inordinately sweaty face to a polish, and Farley nearly tore away the brim of a soft hat.

Collson had them all seated at length, and suggested that Darrel take the stand and tell the miners assembled what he knew about it. This Darrel proceeded to do.

"I was sittin' on the bench outside the engine-room when it happened," testified *The Effie's* day engine-man, "waitin' for a trip to get to the bottom, when Mr. Rummel—the old gent from Colville—come up to me.

"Sez he: 'Youn the engineer?'

"'That's what they callin' me when Old Polly's runnin' good,' sez I. 'Me own mother wouldn't own the name they callin' me she don't,' sez I.

"'Old Polly,'" sez he, kinder like a snappin' turtle;

'I'm not interested in horses but I am in notes an' profits to pay 'em.'

"'The engine,' I sez, 'to the primmer class.'

"'Oh,' he snapped like he'd break his teeth off, 'you're Dan Smart, ain't you?'

"'No, sir,' sez I, takin' a chew, 'Dan lives in Row 3; I live in Row 1, an' my name's Jimmy Darrel,' I laughed, an' he mosied on, an' the bell ringin' I didn't see him for a spell, an' was too busy histin' coal to bother with him even if I had."

The engine-man sat down and Collson called the fireman. Said he:

"'Darrel's told youns about him comin' inter the bilers, an' he stood about five minutes, me shovelin', before he spoke.

"'Me man,' he says, squintin' over them specks of his'n, 'I'm lookin' fer Mister Conomise,' an' pulls out a little book to see if he's spelled the name right.

"'Dutchman or dago?' I asks, goin' up closer, as Darrel was histin' coal an' I could hardly hear what he said.

"'Dutchman,' he squalls; 'Yes, I reckon the ackshun the devil's the matter with you men here as you don't understand English. I thought you was Americans!' laughin' funny-like, by which I thought he'd got a storey to let or was drunk," Farley continued to the evident amusement of his auditors.

"'Dutchman,'" he squalls; 'Yes, I reckon the ackshun suits the word over there, not like this wasteful affair,' which I takes to mean as this yere Conomise is a pop'lar gent in his own country."

"You meanin' Meanster Conomise, don't you, Farley?" the chairman suggested in the pause, during which the fireman looked at him quite seriously.

"Sure," he acquiesced, "I'm sure he didn't ask for the Missis," the fireman reddened and the miners roared, catching the point nicely. Coal Land harbors a sense of

humor as well as fair-play. Collson settled back composedly, trusting that the tale would unfold correctly despite the misunderstanding of names. "But which of the guinnies he wanted I didn't know," Farley persisted, "so says I, 'I'd advise yer to see Young Morris, as he's akquainted with all the pop'lar an' unpop'lar dagoes at Calabrule's an' in their row. If there's anybody round yere as'll know yer man it's him.'"

"Did he?" interrogated a curious hobble-de-hoy well up toward the rostrum, and was immediately squelched by cries of "Silence!" Farley answered during the turmoil:

"This yere Colville man says not. He says . . ."

"Speaker, speak louder, please!" a courteous gentleman in the back of the hall suggested, and the accomodating Farley bawled:

"The — Colville — man — said — not; said — he'd — not — got — round — t'im — yit — but — frum — his — observashun — this — yere — Conomise — was — a — utter — stranger — to — the — foreman — an' — the — whole — durned — plant."

At a word from the chairman Farley improved his pace.

"'Yer case is hopeless,' thinks I, as I went to Battery A to fire an' he foller'd me, an' asked if we couldn't rise steam as good by usin' the 'bug-dust'* as the foreman had made 'em send out after the blow-up, as he'd seen hills of it outside he says.

"I don't know about risin' steam with it," says I, "but I've heard as it's good to raise hell an' fill coffins, when it gits started, an' to make dam fools ask ques-

*The powdered coal inseparable from mining in dry, bituminous veins; much more in evidence where machines undercut, but in The Pittsburgh District prevalent even where men mine by hand. Usually considered useless as fuel, and probably the most dangerous element in coal mining.

tions,' says I, gettin' tired of his bother. I thought he was some bum as had come in to get warm an' was drunk, maybe. Darrel told me after who he was. So he lef' me alone after I told him to go in an' ask Darrel, as he was longer on the job than me an' knowed more about things like that."

"He come into my part," deposed the engineer, an' I seen the game in a minute." Darrel exulted. "I'd done histin' fer a spell an' didn't mind him.

"Is it true about all this extravvygance I've heard, 'Mister—er Polly,' did yer say?" sez he, an' I had to hang my head an' twist an injector so he wouldn't see me laughin'. He told me what Farley said an' about them road-scrapins, an' it was plainer than ever he was drunk. To get rid of him I told him it was, but nothin' to compare with the men gettin' twenty-five hund'ed pounds for ev'ry ton, as I heard they give 'em on the tipple.

"The idee, the idee!" he sez, an' lots of things not so nice. "Just what I thought, an' that's why I come up here," he says, an' went trampin' up them thirty-eight steps to the weigh-office quite frisky but uncertain. The heat in the bilers hadn't made him any soberer."

Micky Gawan, stable-boss, spoke next.

"I was on the tipple gettin' some waste an' car-ile to swab a mule's sore foot, gentlemen an' Mister Chairman," Micky started quite composedly, "an' was talkin to the foreman, who had just come up the pit, when I run into the performance—last act. I knowed old Amos, of course, but wondered what brought him there monkeyin' around, an' was on the p'int of askin' when I see Darrel at the bottom shakin' his fist at me to keep quiet. I did, an' seen him rummagin' round the weighin' office an' gettin' in the weighman's road."

Neither was there doubt in the subsequent deposition of Micky Gawan as to his belief that Rummel was tem-

porarily insane when he had loudly proclaimed it as fact known to every one on the premises (for so they had themselves said to him) that the company was being cheated out of at least five hundred pounds on every ton; said he knew something about scales, and asked who had the regulating of such things there.

"Mr. Morris, the foreman, told him quietly that someone was makin' a monkey of him, as him an' the State Inspector had tended to that duty not long before, at which Rummel motioned the foreman away from the weigh-house. They went toward the step-landin', an' the old man tripped over a rail an' three or four things like this come out of his pocket an' went down the shaft —on'y this one."

Gawan handed an over-leaded scale weight to Collson. The latter looked at the inanimate thief of labor and, silently, without comment, passed it round to those near him on the platform. The use of it and the others which had, according to Gawan, gone precipitately down the shaft, would have robbed each miner of 20 or 25 per cent of his earnings.

"After that," Micky resumed, "I didn't hear no more until the Colville man an' Morris got to argyin' over some p'int, an' Rummel got his shirt off an' said somethin' to Morris about him not bein' so all-fired honest, an' that he was pritty good at hoodwinkin' others. Mr. Rummel was very mad an' careless in his words, an' the big foreman was very white, I noticed, but said nothin' to that, on'y looked at the little man as Mr. Collson's hound would look at the tarrier. What partickler words passed between 'em after I can't say, as the cars was dumpin' then, an' on'y stopped about the time old Amos was so mad the 'baccer juice was runnin' out of his mouth, an' he was tellin' the foreman *it* wasn't as bad as givin' money to innercent girls"

Here Gawan stopped, looked questioningly at Collson.

The old man nodded and the little mule-boss resumed his narrative.

"Just then," said he, taking a new hitch on himself, "Morris seen me right clost, an' it seemed to cross him as anybody should hear what the old man said what he did."

At this he again paused and looked first at Collson and then at John Morris, neither of whom seemed perturbed at all over the implied wickedness of the foreman. Receiving neither encouragement to continue nor hint to stop Micky explained his position to the men:

"That's the truth anyways, gentlemen, an' nothin' but the truth, so help me, though I say it as don't want to. But I was fetched here to tell what I heard, an' was told to say it all." Then he went on:

"Morris didn't say it was the truth nor a lie. He just stood watchin' the funny antics Rummel was cuttin' up, an' said out loud: "Youn worse than poor Pietrecco . . ."

"What he meant by that I can't say as I didn't hear nothin' pass between 'em about the explosion. But I did see Rummel push his fist up in Morris's face an' tell him he was somethin' that was no sooner out of his dirty mouth than Morris took him by the coat collar an—" Gawan faltered—"Jim Darrel can tell you the rest."

With that Gawan sat down, heaving an intense sigh of relief, and the engine-man continued:

"I was again takin' a whiff in the open, gentlemen an' chairman, after the tanker had signaled a wreck on th' bottom, an' I heard the nasty words plain where I stood forty odd feet below the two men, an', in less'n a minute—yes, in less'n two seconds—up at the landin' was a man's body hangin' with somebody holdin' it steady so it shouldn't fall sideways into the shaft! An' the next I seen was a bundle of arms an' legs comin' bumpitty-bumpitty-bump an' a hat flyin' down the hole, an' me at

the bottom a-holdin' my breath helpless as a child to stop it"

"Of course," said Collson; "Of course," murmured the men in a real big wave of sympathy for Darrel's horrible position.

"An' that's all I seen," said he, "exceptin' the foreman an' the men on the tipple laughin' at the top, an' Rummel a-jumpin' straight up an' down an' cussin' somethin' awful at the bottom, an' rubbin' his—— with me there a Baptist deacon an' a married man with nine children beside not countin' Pollie Darrel"

Here the rotund guardian of "Old Polly's" activities sat down, his story still murmuring its fragments over his lips. Like "Polly" as it neared the end it had increased in speed, with the result that it was still running almost by sheer force of momentum and horror when Collson arose to address the audience.

"You knowin', gentlemen, what happened after that. Mr. Wilkes, as was always such a good friend of Eldred Morris's until then, told him the mine would run without his services until they could get another to fill his place, an' Morris wanted us to go on that way, as Superintendent Turley was a certificate man an' the mine needn't stop.* He said he was goin' to quit soon anyway for a long spell of hard studyin'. Wasn't them the fac's?" he turned to John Morris.
menced:

"That would be good enough on'y for one thing. The foreman lost his place because he wouldn't help in robbin' the men, an' for the men to let him go that way would rob him of his chances. The fact as he was discharged at his first place will go hard on him gettin' another.

The Local President nodded and Collson recom-

*At that period the State allowed no mine employing over ten men to run unless in direct charge of an official duly certified by the Commonwealth as competent.

If Rummel, or whoever is owner of *Th' Effie* in these puzzlin' days, lets him resign after bein' re-instated, that puts a different face on it."

While the applause died down the old miner sat, tremulous with age and unusual emotion, seeing, perhaps, the rupture of life-long friendships. He turned to Darrel and suggested he act as chairman. "I want to make a motion," he said. He did, as follows:

"An' now, Mr. Chairman an' gents, I move as the matter as it stands between these men be rayconsidered as far as concerns Eldred Morris, or let the mine stand idle until it is!"

The old lampman placed a bitter emphasis on the last of his sentence. He got no further. The motion was seconded simultaneously in several places over the hall, and met with an approval which shook the windows, these being none of the tightest. The younger men, having more deep at heart the prospective play-days than any possible vindication of their respected foreman, flung hats and caps and yelled like charging Sioux. The older men remained to formally enact the unanimous decision and elect another "Speshul Commity" to carry the news to Wilkes.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN INTERCESSION

Following the difference between Eldred Morris and Miss Wilkes the friendship between the elder members of the two families was augmented rather than diminished. This paradoxically pleasant fact was not the result of the lover's quarrel nor any attempt to patch it, but of the life-friendship of the former schoolma'ams, and the fact of Emily Morris being very ill of body. Such was the diagnosis of Doctor Hilman. The neighbors, ignorant of such matters as neighbors are, said "worry." Effie and Elizabeth Wilkes went often to see her, and rarely without a few flowers or else some delicacy to tempt the invalid's palate.

The young man and woman being about equally disposed in stubbornness studiously avoided each other. Mrs. Wilkes carefully abetted this, by watching that Eldred Morris had passed the big house on his way to Colville before she and Elizabeth started for Morris's. Once or twice in severe crises of Emily Morris's illness she had gone at night, but as a rule her plans were not upset; the erstwhile foreman persistently pondered intricate problems in the theory of mining. The very momentum, once freed of the drag of responsibility, gave him time to look neither to the right nor left. The College faculty, after mature consideration of Eldred Morris's experience in mining, and the State papers granted him, had agreed on the unusual course. All these were to count toward an ultimate degree as Mining Engineer.

"It's like taking a car downhill with four sprags in and three of them suddenly breaking," he told Collson.

But the strenuous mental effort was telling. He had lost much of his former heaviness and slowness. He had grown more nervous than phlegmatic, and was unusually irritable at times. He and Wilkes had spoken in much heat at parting, both declaring they would or would not do this or that if the heavens fell, or, what would be equally bad for Carbonia as well as Wilkes and a few others, if the steady contract with certain large steel works went by default. When the crucial test came both wisely reconsidered.

The one most close to the men was prompted more by outside circumstances than otherwise. Each day Eldred Morris held firm meant to the semi-starving miners the loss of nearly a thousand dollars in wages, and, what was still worse, a more slender hold on a fast-vanishing contract meaning much to their future. That these considerations had made desperate others as well may be assumed by the fact of Wilkes starting toward Morris's very late one night immediately on his return from a conference with Rummel at Colville. And Elizabeth would have no denial but that she should accompany him thither "to see Mrs. Morris." Fortunate subterfuge.

"But it's almost hopeless, I know," Wilkes desponded, as he left Elizabeth some distance from the house and with hard beating heart went up to the door and rapped. He knew by all the ethics of mine officialdom he and Eldred Morris should have settled the matter alone. Yet he feared to do so. And Elizabeth, anyhow, was a better talker, and—here Roger Wilkes's surmising stopped.

His first effort had met with no response. "They're all asleep," he said to the woman in the darkness.

"Knock harder, papa," Elizabeth whispered urgently through the blackness between them. "There's a light

in this side-window or near it, and a minute ago it moved. I saw someone bending over a table until he pulled the blind down."

So Wilkes rapped again—harder—and yet again, and in the end was rewarded by someone calling to him from the window: "Hello! Who's there?"

"It's Wilkes," said the man at the bottom, looking up. Then: "Is that Eldred?" knowing it quite well, but parleying for an opening.

For an answer there came what sounded to Wilkes like a grunt, which is proof evident that Eldred Morris could be both stubborn and ill-mannered on occasion.

"I've come about *The Effie*," Wilkes explained, seeing that the man above made no move toward coming down nor asking him in. "Rummel's agreed that you can return"

In the heavy, ominous, silence which followed it seemed to the woman in the shadows, inky black on each side of the light coming from the open window, that her heart was beating in her throat. To Wilkes the tension was still less endurable. The next word meant to him the possible saving of half a life's labor or its irredeemable loss. His fingers went cold in his gloves while he waited over what was in reality only a few moments of consideration, yet seemed an eternity. His teeth chattered yet the night was not overly cold for November. He grew suddenly warm with passion. The window started to slide with the answer:

"Tell Rummel I'm not, good night" The name had been fatal to the attempt's success. The blind again went down.

Sorrowfully the pair started over the knoll and into the swail dividing the two homes, Elizabeth pleading, insisting, that Wilkes let her return and see if she could do better. Her effort finally prevailed. They returned.

She urged him to go with her but he refused, prefer-

ring to remain on the little knoll some distance from the house.

The light in the window still shone dimly through the blind, lighting within the porer over cosine and tangent. John Morris had risen and was in the kitchen for a drink of water for the invalid when the second rapping came. Wondering, he opened the door, and the girl told her errand. He went to the stairs.

"Somebody's here an' wants to see you, Eldred," he called.

"Then tell 'em to climb," came the impatient reply. "I've no time to be bothered at this time of night," he persisted testily, impatient with the untimely visits which had twice spoiled an isosceles drawing and a chance of bed.

"But it's a lady—Lizzie Wilkes," retorted John Morris in a tone of mild censure. He was half-way up the steps but returned on seeing the light followed by his son at the top.

"Ask Miss Wilkes to come up, dad," the larger voice commanded, forgetting the proprieties. Then as suddenly remembering: "But never mind, I'll come down."

When he reached the kitchen his father had discreetly gone back to bed, leaving the young woman crimsoning and paling by turns, her deep bosom heaving like undulating water. Eldred's greeting was not conducive of composure.

"You've come about the mine?" he inquired rather curtly, and she nodded. "And at nearly midnight—alone?"

Elizabeth reassured him on that point by stating that her papa preferred to wait out near a certain clump of hazels. And then the naughty fellow laughed, remembering a certain hoarse cough the girl before him had heard there one night. He knew the spot well and recalled it

with pleasure. She did, too, and the same thought flashed a rose-red color to her very ears.

"It's a splendid place for meditation," the man smiled, which hid the latent contempt lying in the words. "But this kitchen isn't," he shivered purposely; "it's too cold. There's a little heater in my den," he suggested, "if you care to come up and get warm . . ." They went up.

Eldred Morris seated himself on the little table and gave Elizabeth the only chair. She blushed fearfully when he tormentingly asked her if she had brought the note she promised one Sunday morning in the coppice, while he thought without expression of the strangeness of prophecy sometimes. He turned suddenly to more serious matters:

"Why don't Rummel go ahead and run?" and it was obviously with a sense of gratification that he asked that question. "I made an oath that if it lay to me to start it it would wait until——."

"Until—what?"

"Well, if you must have it—until hell froze over"—he said bluntly, "or what is quite as likely—until he brought Margaret Thomas here so I could hear her tell him he was a liar," which was not so shocking to the girl as if she had not heard it before. "That's why I dismissed your father. But anyhow I have no time—now—to boss. I'm after something better," he waved his hand over the instruments and papers, "and I'm going to get it, too, if I live long enough," he averred with determined pride. "I'm determined to have that in a frame, and here," he touched his forehead, whether boastfully or not the reader may decide for himself, "that'll mean more honor to the woman who'll bear my name than all the money at Colville First National with what goes with—that."

He looked at his visitor as if questioning a denial. But she could not well deny that she had but vaguely heard. In a desperate attempt to review each point she

had been told to make concerning her mission in the present, her mind had closed almost to all else. She reverted directly to the subject at hand.

"Eldred," she pleaded, "don't you know, really, that the men won't go back until *you* tell them to?"

"I did hear Rummel and your dad had been doing a little missionary work with a view to having them change their mind," he countered. "But what about Wilkes—what about that your father said?"

He started to say something else, but with an old-time familiarity born partly of the occasion and partly of the desperate situation as she well knew of at home, she put her hand up to his mouth and stopped him.

"Don't," she begged; "please don't. I've heard all the miserable details. Papa's sorry or—or he wouldn't have come here as he did"

It was some minutes before another word passed between them, as attested by the gold chronometer beating its way toward dawn. Sleeping in idleness, without air to measure, the wooden paddles of the anemometer snuggled at diverse angles in their case, and the lightless Davy leaned dejectedly against a new transit. The man looked without purpose at a map nearly completed, and she at his eyes. And in both minds many lines of thought crossed and conflicted.

At length he asked if they had seen Rummel that night, and she assured him it was the result of a journey there which had brought them to see him so late.

"We didn't get home until about eleven, and would have waited until to-morrow only papa thought he might give the men a day's work sooner—if you—if you were agreed. And the contract——."

Morris impatiently stopped her. The indirect suggestion that he had been and might be responsible for such suffering as was reaching flood tide in the village ruffled him.

"My sanction!" he spoke harshly. "Doesn't he mean that of three hundred men whose cupboards are empty for a matter of—of principle and honesty?" At a later time those words were recalled in poignant memory and—blood. He added ironically: "But what's the use? I reckon there are old fools as well as young ones. But the older the worse, I fancy; they haven't the excuse of inexperience."

"Mr. Rummel seemed to think he had," Elizabeth interjected more hopefully, "when he spoke of those steps to-night," the light in her smiling eyes illumining the gloom in the darker, sterner, ones. The thought of the last act in the tipple melodrama brought better humor.

"Then I suppose I'm to—what am I to do at this time of night, Elizabeth, or Miss Wilkes, is it?" striding toward the chair she had pushed away from the table. As he came nearer she rose suddenly, but her eyes looked at the floor. She made no resistance when he gently laid his hand on her shoulder and repeated the last question.

"The old name hasn't changed—yet," she said rather sadly, "and it never will to—my friends, I hope." Then, raising her eyes to his she asked pleadingly: her fingers creeping up and touching his hand: "And you and I will always be—that, Eldred, I think, no matter what happens, won't we?"

"Is it true," he side-stepped the question, "that it has to change to—that?" he squeezed the soft hand and his lips quivered with awakening passion, while the woman's heart beat tumultuously and the crimson came and went in her cheeks. "Is there nothing else for it but—that?"

Then she told him that he had asked but did not want to hear, yet, hearing, found no condemnation at his tongue's end—not then. Both found means of occupying their fingers and their thoughts. Her head was bent when he broke the silence, but at his first words she

raised it and for the second time that night tried to stop him by putting her hand over his lips. He pulled it gently away.

"Why not?" he queried; "I can perhaps wrap up a messy package as neatly as it need be done," but he spoke without mirth. He desired only to ease her mind rather than his own, to help her—the girl he loved—acquiesce in the inevitable, seeing that it must be. Eldred Morris felt his own relative insignificance in the face of money-power as he had never sensed it before, but, being a true son of The Carbon Hills he had the courage of his native element to accept that he must accept without cringing. The fact that the prospect seared his heart was not as evident as it might have been while he tried to soothe another's. It was very evident he felt most kindly toward Roger Wilkes, and repeated almost word for word what had been said at the big house regarding "The Price" demanded by Rummel, which caused Elizabeth to open her eyes in astonishment.

"Please don't," she pleaded, as he recalled words and scenes which unknown to her had been re-enacted in Carbonia's tenements. "I see you understand, and—I'm glad you do."

"I have tried to understand, Elizabeth," he affirmed, "because I have tried to find the whys and wherefores of your own actions, otherwise," he said sadly, questioning her with his eyes, "I would doubt even my own mother since she, too, is a woman."

His eyes were hard like tempered steel as he said these words, and this:

"But there are some things harder for even a woman to bear through life than an empty cupboard occasionally, Elizabeth. Knowing men better than mines, your father knows that, too; as regards anyone else I——."

Seeing how his bitterness wounded, he spoke more buoyantly, hopeful. "I know enough of this matter,

Elizabeth, to assure you we do not blame—you," purposely using the plural, "no more than I could be blamed for the strike. And as you said," he took her unresisting hand in his to wish her good-bye, "we can still be friends, I hope, because mother's ill, as you know, and little errands of charity and kindness are always permissible after marriage as well as before, particularly," he added with a sly twinkle puckering the corners of his eyes, "when there's no boy handy to bring them—the flowers or puddings, I mean—and Sophy's in the tub; and in addition," he ran on without giving her a chance to object to his unconventional propositions, which she hadn't time to amend anyhow, while the tears dried and were replaced by smiles chasing each other like little sunbeams in a grape-arbor after a midsummer's rain, and the man's voice went up and down in tiny galloping cadences that sang of Love Uncrushed and Hope Eternal, "and in addition Mrs. MacDonald's abed with the 'leventh little Donald, so the fireboss—who is *The Effie's* expectant foreman—came to inform us yesterday, meanwhile sputtering equal amounts of Scotch brogue and Scotch rye and . . . But that's all," he said breathlessly, turning her face round full to his own, "and pity poor dad!"

"Oh," exclaimed Elizabeth, quite as positively as if she had been outside to see, "I almost forgot him; but I'm glad it's moderated."

"Yes," he replied, "it's moderated considerably, and he won't mind the wait," which double meaning wasn't as obvious as the farewell touch of his hand in hers.

A little later a now shivering girl was telling with dithering tongue to a man not quite frozen but almost, what a terribly hard time she had to convince a certain young mining man that it would take but a few minutes of his valuable time to do her a little favor—to kindly go across the fields and tell Fireman "Duck" Farley—who was on night turn that week—he could blow that

almost rusty whistle immediately; that he could keep its lever fastened down just a moment under sixty minutes after he had toot-en-toot-en-tooted it so Carbonia would think for a certainty the mine was blown up or the tipple on fire.

And then when Bobbie Burns MacDonald—having the longest legs and the thinnest body of any representative of the male in our village—should come running with his night-shirt to the wind so as to be first on the scene—to disillusion him kindly, and advise him that it was something infinitely better and almost as interesting, and that he could at the earliest possible moment convey the same to Carbonia; that Eldred Morris was going to stand at the shaft at starting-time that same morning and advise the men they were now absolved from their pact, but that he had unfortunately made certain arrangements at Colville College which he could not very well break, but that he would give in his resignation to take place immediately in favor of Donald MacDonald, whom the old men liked almost as well and the young ones a great deal better because of his being on speaking terms with Stradivarius as well as Sir Humphrey Davy, and who was withal a gentleman much more deserving of Carbonia's favors, having, in the preceding month, added to the village assets a pair of twins—one of whom Eldred had omitted—and a Pennsylvania First Class Mine Foreman's Certificate.

* * * * * *

There passed a period the exact length of which is immaterial to our story. We do not recall its approximation anyway. One of those frequent changes in the National life was come. For some time Prosperity had been hanging on the lagging heels of Panic. The entire Nation as well as the mine industry shared the uplift. The "bulls" on the stock exchange at Pittsburgh as elsewhere went "wild." Mines which had for a number of years

dragged out a precarious existence with the ever-present shadow of bankruptcy hanging over them, were sprucing up. Many were sold, some becoming by purchase and exchange of stock units in the huge corporation known as The Coal Trust. Morgan—the Napoleon of industry—was combining great steel mills with each other, while other lesser minds did the same thing in our industry. Big contracts were going to be the rule instead of the exception. Astute Roger Wilkes saw through the industrial clouds a rainbow of hope. He took advantage of certain options which a few months later would have been ruthlessly closed to him. In the meantime *The Effie* boomed, and several months passed without Eldred Morris seeing Elizabeth again. She had several times accompanied her mother on missions of sympathy to the invalid, but always on those days and hours when the embryo mining engineer was in school at Colville.

Then came a period without visit or word from the big house. Through Sophie, Carbonia heard whispers, which could not be substantiated, of an approaching wedding—of much argument and continued difference of opinion with the masterful Effie nearly always the victor. This domination had never lessened, according to Miss Sophie, neither had the former school teacher's desire to "be somebody, indeed!" financially, at almost any price. How much of this was true and how much false Eldred Morris had no means of finding out, for Mrs. Wilkes talked only of the weather, the mine, and its prospects, at Mrs. Morris's, if we except the comparison of "symptoms."

The truth dawned vengefully on the former mine-foreman one morning when he met Wilkes on the path leading to the fast-growing *Effie*. Here, on those days when school was not in session, the mining student spent much of his time with firebosses and foreman and Turley. For the old lampman his friendship and respect were never greater—and this included also almost the entire person-

nel of the big mine. And in unusual degree this was returned. But in mining matters Eldred Morris had outgrown his miner-friends; he stood on an eminence alone in his own circle now, soul and body absorbed in the greater features of this ever-growing industry. He was going over this morning to see a big new fan recently installed when Wilkes met him.

He spoke rather coldly, yet sadly, Eldred thought. His looks were those of a beaten fighter. This was their first personal contact since the strike. He inquired regarding Mrs. Morris, and was sorry to hear she was worse, and that Margaret Thomas, having recently become Margaret Farley, had left and the men were batching, no other girl being available since Esther went away.

"We must go over to see her," he said more cordially, meaning Mrs. Morris.

Eldred Morris said nothing, but turned to go. Wilkes, as by an afterthought, called to him and thrust forward a square, unsealed, envelope containing what seemed like heavy paper or cardboard upon which invitations to weddings are usually engraved.

"I've just given MacDonald one, and intended to send this over to your folks as a courtesy to your father and mother, you know," thus qualifying what he had at first meant to say. Morris slipped it into his pocket. "I, at least, wouldn't want our old friends to think a little prosperity has turned our heads," Wilkes murmured almost to himself. They parted.

Standing beside the great steel blades as they whirled above the fan-shaft Eldred Morris read the thing in the envelope. His face was nearly as white as the paper, and his hand trembled slightly as a moment later he lifted the now torn bits—exquisitely perfumed—first to his nostrils, and a peculiar smile awoke in his dark eyes.

"Perhaps," he said, holding his open palm with the heaped fragments on it directly in line with, but not too

near, the swirling vortex. For weeks, perhaps months, as blackened, indecipherable things, held tight by the force of rotation against the steel, they would whirl there darkening faster than grew the gloom clutching the miner-student's heart.

When he reached home he carried out some little attentions to his mother and said nothing about the thing he had destroyed. When he had occasion to go out into the dark that night the light in a certain room shone vividly, tormenting, across the field, and filled him with a tumultuous emotion that endured. But with dawn came overwhelming purpose: work: work: work, more eager than before, and with it a sense of acquiescence in the unavoidable.

CHAPTER XVII.

“WHERE THEY KEEP LITTLE BABIES”

Mrs. Wilkes had crossed The Rubicon and found rest, and her needle plied busily each day and ofttimes into the night. Roger had found unrest, uncertainty. Rumors were rife but thus far nothing beyond the mere commonplace could be proven, and weren't all boys thus? Tragedy and crime grow behind walls sometimes.

This contention being settled in her favor Effie Wilkes found no objection to acting as chaperon to Elizabeth when they went, as Roger had promised, to see Mrs. Morris. All danger of a mesalliance past these visits were more frequent, of an evening as often as of a morning or noon. And on one such occasion Effie Wilkes found her friend much worse after having grown somewhat better. Eldred, Emily Morris cried, was going away. He had applied for and obtained a position as foreman in a distant field. He had decided for the present to discontinue his studies. She was concerned for Tom, too, who had followed Esther to Pittsburgh, and hoped the letter brought up from Colville post office by the Wilkes's maid, and which Effie Wilkes handed to John Morris for Eldred, was from him. It had no return card, but was a bulky thing indeed and hardly such as Tom would write under ordinary circumstances. Yet it was postmarked “Pittsburgh.” And didn't Mrs. Wilkes know that Esther had gone to the city and that Tom had followed her—really? Well, such was the case, and Mrs. Wilkes, pleading only that her friend would cease her harmful worry, gave no indication of regret. Instead,

while Elizabeth, in another room, stifled her curiosity as best she could, Effie Wilkes talked of the great prospects now in view for miners and their families, too, if—with a meaning glance at John Morris who sat in the corner with MacDonald—if the men behaved as they should.

“But it’s getting dark,” she said, standing at the door and gazing across the field lying between the two houses, “and I’ve some work to do. Really, Emmy, dear, I must go,” she smoothed the parting and the pillow, “but Elizabeth can finish straightening up for you, and I’ll stop at Mary MacDonald’s and tell Sophy to call for her when she comes home. She had a letter for Mary, too, you know.” Then, with a parting admonition aside to Elizabeth not to stay too long she went out.

Upstairs a man with all the color gone from his face took from his pocket a crumpled note, and set it beside a long, nervously-scrawled letter, indifferently spelled and composed. The note was as brief as the letter long, and had been left on Eldred’s study-table the day Tom left. After telling why, it added:

I’m going to find her and bring her home
if I can

“Poor Tom,” Eldred Morris spoke to the transit near the wall, “success and failure are close companions, sometimes, as more than you have found.”

He went down to the group in the kitchen.

Elizabeth was setting some dishes in the cupboard when he went in with the letter opened in his hand. He had not seen her for many weeks, but he spoke with no more warmth than to the most casual acquaintance.

“Good evening, Miss Wilkes,” he nodded coldly, and the girl covered her agitation in replying by turning and aimlessly picking up a broom, just as she had previously covered her dress with one of Emily Morris’s aprons far too large for her. Eldred bent to the couch and spoke

very quietly to his mother, almost, it seemed to more than one in that room, as one speaks where the loved dead lie. Then he spoke aside to his father. MacDonald had gone home with Mrs. Wilkes. Emily Morris turned on the couch and spoke to Elizabeth.

"It's a letter from Tom," she said, somewhat tremulously, "about—about—perhaps you wouldn't care to hear it? He found Esther, Eldred says."

For a moment the girl twirled the broom-handle over her knees. She had seated herself on one side of the kitchen, Eldred on the other, where the light of a kerosene lamp was intensified and deflected onto the papers in his hand. The struggle was evidently short.

"If you folks don't mind," she wavered a little; "I—I always liked Esther and would be glad to hear how she is . . ."

Near the stove John Morris shifted uneasily, and smoked prodigiously while the slightly returning color again left the face of the man below the lamp, leaving it this time more ghastly than before. Elizabeth Wilkes stole a furtive glance at Eldred Morris. He looked neither at her nor anyone else in the room. His eyes glued to the apparently lengthy letter in his hand; his hand trembled violently. And, sensing not the cause, the girl twirled the broom and—wondered.

The silence became oppressive—unbearable. For a moment Eldred Morris looked at the floor in deep thought, then at his mother, then direct at the girl. Elizabeth did not see him, for her eyes were on the broom-handle, nor yet when his features set sternly and lines came in his forehead that had not been there before, and his free hand was white where he clutched the chair. The tentative reader was obviously striving for self-control.

He started slowly, faltering a little, but soon gained composure as he read the first of many pages:

Dear Eldred, I found Esther, but she won't be coming back nor me for a while so I thought I'd better tell you all about things here as I know you will be anxious. And it is raining bad so I think I'll stop in the hotel to-night and put down here just the same as I could tell you.

It took me several days to find her because she had not gone to the big hospitals as I thought, but one of them private ones, and I had to go to them all nearly before I found her. But I found her at last and she was not worrying much, that it was to late to worry now she said. Fact was I was surprised to find her so cheerfull, but you know how Esther always laughed at you when she had ought to cry you would think.

"Yes, my poor Tom; that's only too true," came with a sigh from the couch, as if the invalid were speaking to some invisible body. Eldred resumed:

And as near as I can tell I will tell you what she said about everybody she asked showing her the way to the big hospitals, until one policeman who helped her across the car tracks showed her the right one after directing her to the one she did not want to go to. He looked at her so funny she said, laughing for all she was so white looking, that I just had to tell him, she said, that if I did walk a bit awkward that I did not need no crutches nor a leg

cut off, and that I could walk without his arm.

No, he said, looking at me and laffing a bit, I'm afraid it's a different place than my arm you need. And I told him it was—that I wanted to find a place where they kept little babies. And he asked me did I mean the private places, because it cost money there, and I told him yes, that I had the money because gentlemen that send for babies generally give the money to buy them dont they, and the big fellow laffed so I seen him wiping his eyes as soon as he stopped and looked up the street at the building he showed me, she said. Maybe policemen laff, sometimes, like Esther, when they feel like crying.

I had a sister too he said, God help her, but he did not laff when he said that. Esther put her hand under the pillow and showed me two one-hundred dollar bills she had not changed and I asked her some questions . . . No he did not pay me that for working for his mother at Colville nor for slapping his face in the grove she said, and I understood.

At this point Eldred dropped the hand holding the letter to his knee, and let his eyes wander toward the door. The young lady there looked very white, and the room must have suddenly become too hot to suit her. She pushed the door wide open and fanned herself with Emily Morris's gingham. The woman on the couch shifted without speaking, but it was obvious she wanted

to badly. In the middle of the room, with his hands in each other, and both behind him, John Morris paced the floor in soft-slippered feet and filled the space above him with great banks of smoke. Not a single word passed anent that phase of it. No one condemned audibly at least, although Eldred had several times caught his mother's lips moving and her eyes resting savagely on the girl at the door. Oh, unfathomable woman! Eldred Morris commenced a new page.

The second day Esther wasn't as well. That was a miserable day for I had a notion to go out and choke the loud-mouths shouting cabbage and things and a girl as sick as she was. Why at Carbonia they took the wagons round through the fields because Margaret Thomas's sister had nervous prostration you remember Eldred.

Morris read this sentence with a sigh at the boy's simple innocence. "That isn't Carbonia by any means," he said, and from the couch: "Poor Esther! Poor little soul!"

The third day was the last, Eldred started again, and I kept waiting to see if I could send any good news. Esther said when I went in she thought I had gone back. Not till you can come along I told her trying to cheer her up. But she could see the end allright and was worried over the baby a lot. I give her my solemn oath we'd look after it, Eldred, and she went to sleep right away and the doctor said he wondered

why some kind of action was delayed till then as he had tried to get morfine to take effect for many hours. I could have told him but I didn't and it will if I have to pay for it myself. But that is easy. This is what got me. God how hard this was to have to promise to bury her here among strangers in a strange cemetery. She simply would not hear of being took to Carbonia. Said she didn't care about anybody seeing her but there was some girls up there as might be glad behind their tears which they would not but she thought they would.

This information added somewhat to the color already blood-red on the cheeks of the girl at the door. What followed next didn't reduce it by any means.

I asked her if I should send word to you to have him pinched but she wouldn't hear of it—said it would do no good now and might some way give his folks the chance to get her baby and she would rather he died than that. This seemed to worry her terrible and whatever his daddy might be, Eldred, he's a fine little fellow as ever I seen but all like Esther (the simple miner's heart eased its own wound a little). Make arrangements right away about getting him out of here and—.

At this point John Morris spoke first. Emily Morris also said something. Eldred also had a suggestion that

he wanted to voice for fear he might forget, and Miss Wilkes thought that Mary MacDonald and her husband would be less worried if they knew. She slipped out almost unnoticed and returned with the MacDonalds just in time to hear the very thing she had tried to avoid hearing—without seeming to concur in wickedness in which she had no part by leaving now rather than hear the last of it—the sad ending of a long letter written to ease an over-burdened heart that had loved unwisely and too well.

“Sit here, Mary,” the reader turned, letter in hand, to the white-faced woman whose excessive blue eyes bulged more than ever with suppressed excitement and curiosity. Miss Wilkes had said only: “The letter’s about your niece, and they want you to read it yourself,” hoping it would be finished by the time they got there. It wasn’t. Mrs. MacDonald had picked up her baby and almost ran. Donald followed more sedately as became the official over so many men. But his big heart thumped hard in expectation of the worst, and his features almost equalled his wife’s in pallor when Emily Morris whispered:

“Eldred hasn’t finished yet, Mary, but I’m afraid—I’m afraid that Esther won’t come back.” What else she might have said was shut off by her son.

“I’ll just go on and finish it, Donald, and you and Mary can take it home with you and read it all.” He started on the line last read:

to make arrangements about taking him
out of here.

“That’s the child, Mary,” Mrs. Morris brooked the reader’s look of censure to explain: “Esther’s child.”

She knew she was going to die
and_____.

The letter was stopped again, this time by an exclamation from Mrs. MacDonald.

"Oh, my God!" cried she, "is Essie dead?" looking for sympathy to Mrs. Morris. But the invalid shut her lips resolutely, and MacDonald whispered eagerly for his wife to control herself: didn't she know there was a sick woman here? The woman bit her lips in a brave effort.

She knowed she was going to die, and all I did to fool her was no use. I told her to hurry and get well and come with me to Carbonia and we would get married at Tirrel's and the child could stay with her too if she wanted it.

"Gude lad, Tammas," Donald MacDonald said, at which John Morris looked at him, questioning the assertion, while the woman on the couch turned her face with a sigh to the wall.

She only smiled and shook her head. She couldn't hardly talk for she was a lot worse and as white as a ghost—a hemmerage of something had taken place the doctor said and that he didn't want to let me in to see her that morning only she begged him to. You know how pink she was. Her head fell back every time she tried to raise it like that dago Rossi you told me about as was hit with slate, and I knowed then Esther wasn't coming back with me

And here the letter stopped again because of the reader. The voice of the strong man had at last overcome his efforts to control it. He waited for composure while

his mother twisted the fingers of her right hand in her left until they cracked, and insisted to John Morris she didn't want any wine. And the man who had asked her unconsciously increased his pace and pulled hard on a pipe that had not an atom of unsmoked tobacco in its bowl. At the door Elizabeth Wilkes sat without speaking, seeing nothing in that room and nothing without but dark just then. The glitter of Colville gold had turned to brass and even that corroded. The taste of verdigris in libertinism was acrid. She offered no word; no question was asked, each kindly keeping his or her gaze elsewhere until Eldred continued:

That night I had no sleep. It was hardly daylight when I went to see how she was. The doctor was asleep but the darkey woman let me in and seemed to know all about things. She pointed to a different room than Esther was in the day before and it was so dark she come in after me and turned up the gas . . . The worried look was gone . . . Esther was peacefull enough then, Eldred . . . I asked the woman where would be the best place to bury her and she says, home, Honey. I says she has none and told her all about it then. So she told me a place and give me the address of a minister and a undertaker. Esther had give me that money the day before.

Oh, God, how it hurt you will never know Eldred! You can tell mother and dad I feel fifty years older than when I come away, and still you had better not. Mother will surely feel dif-

ferent—now. I should sent for some of you but Esther said no, and it was all I could do for her to do as she said.

Eldred Morris read fast—then—concealing no word, laying no wounds.

The minister—a kind young fellow he was—and me was all and enough—to much. I shall stay here for awhile is why I wrote so much and it is raining hard and putting it here has seemed to help me bear it. The doctor at that place told me to forget it! Said there was things in the town only he didn't say things he said girls as would make a man forget anything. It shows he dont know. But he laffed as if Esther's case was common. And not only him but everybody here seems to be so full of business I wonder if they will ever find time to go through what poor Esther did.

There followed an address where they would find the child, and a postscript urging haste, and instructions regarding identity in case Tom did not see them, which he thought unlikely, as he was going—he did not know where—but certainly farther away from there. Which hotel it would be he could not say, so many there were to choose from.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A WISE DOG

Silently and without word to either of the women Eldred Morris entered an adjoining room. Its door stood open. From a mantel on its opposite side he dropped into his pocket an article that glistened in the semi-dark. Returning to the kitchen he reached from a rack his hat and coat and left the house. It had suddenly grown too close. God's great atmosphere called to him that night as the only place giving ease to a sense of suffocation arising from the effluvial gases of disconcerting humanity. He turned on the hillside and looked back. The figure of the girl he loved still moved about in the light. His mother he could not see from there, and John Morris was gone to share his trouble with MacDonald or with Collson.

Elizabeth bent over the oven. Pie for the dinner-pail of John Morris was burning. During the early night Emily Morris had directed and The Local President clumsily made the dough, and now forgot all about it. Neither woman spoke to the other. From a house recently built in that vicinity a feminine voice came faintly, then higher, more voluminous, until the words reached even to the man on the hill:

“ * * beyond The River,
Where the surges cease to roll.”

And its soothing echoes reached the souls of the two women mutely listening.

As she had done many times before in anguished

moments Emily Morris caught the refrain and hummed gently, tremblingly almost as the voice that joined tearfully, almost fearfully, at first with her own:

“ * * beyond The River,
Where the surges cease to roll.”

Eldred Morris went slowly on. He neared the village edge. Behind him several rows of lights twinkled merrily in the extreme dark between a fitful moon. Human sounds reached upward coupled here and there with indifferent music of mouth-organ, accordion or fiddle. The pulsing joyousness evident on every hand grated mockingly. To the wanderer it seemed sacrilegious that none there should feel as he felt: sorrow as he sorrowed. The city was not alone in this. The occasional laughter were as the desecration of a grave new made.

Morris went past several detached homes in which lived the better class of our village: homes of men and women who moved not at each change to the white mountain ever in the distant coal fields. He came to Collson's batch and heard his father's voice within. He opened the picket gate, then turned abruptly and went onto the road again. In the far sky the great furnaces reflected their glare on the floating clouds.

And that was the way Esther was gone. There she had found that rest and peace which come to maid and matron alike in turn, without discrimination as to virtue or to vice, we hope. But where was Tom? Drinking, perhaps, or in some place of amusement across the river, his quiet laugh covering an almost bleeding heart. And surcease there? Hardly. Too unreal, too shallow, these mimicries of real life. The mind reflective and desirous may find unsnagged waters, pellucid depths for its barque, but not there.

Eldred Morris turned again at the lane running past Wilkes's and on to Calabrule's, passing on his way several

habitations flaunted by yellow journalism in the generic category as "miners' hovels." Here, as nearer the village proper, the increase in men had been the cause of several new homes. In one of these were gathered a few congenial spirits singing from hymnals lighted by a large lamp hung with glass pendants. The women's dresses were simple but well made, and none there showed signs of poverty rampant or distress enforced. They sat on good chairs, and their feet rested on carpet clean as from the loom.

In the room someone played softly and well on a piano-organ, at that time an instrument almost as costly as a fair piano today. This prayer-meeting was one of several held during the week in different homes, all the direct result of missionary work of good men and women from Colville churches.

For a moment Morris stopped, almost decided to go in. The organ played the prelude of the hymn with touching tenderness, and invoked unvoiced accompaniment in the heart of the onlooker. Through the window he watched the tiny congregation rise and sing:

"Come unto Me when shadows darkly gather;
When the sad heart is weary and distressed.

* * * *

He started on, heart less bitter. There followed more singing of which he heard a part, the wind bringing words and music in rising and diminishing cadences to his ears:

"There like an Eden blossoming in gladness
Bloom the fair flowers the earth too rudely pressed.
Come unto Me all ye who droop in sadness,
Come unto Me and I will give you rest."

And from the depths of the miner's heart there echoed a silent hope that it might be even so.

Then his steps and thought turned in another direc-

tion, the former toward Justice Tirrel's and the latter toward revenge. The mollifying effect natural to song and prayer waned as he left its zone. For a fleeting moment he had almost relented enough to return and ask the word or two he believed would set all things right between him and Elizabeth, although, being a man, he could not to his own satisfaction—despite his words to her—analyze what seemed an acquiescence in the interest of mere material advancement.

He cast the prompting aside and went on out to the right in line with the great mine buildings, looming like the huge hulk of a disabled liner. The exhaust of the pumps and fan echoed against the distant fringe of wood, and before the fires in the boiler-room "Duck" Farley bent elf-like in the brilliant glow from an occasionally opened door. Where the cage hung above the shaft an electric bulb shone like a tiny star, for the mine had changed its method and Micky Gawan no longer buried dead mules.

This passed, the impulse to go directly to Colville grew stronger. Into Eldred Morris's heart came a feeling, and into every muscle a tenseness, such as he had felt only twice in his life before this: once when the result occasioned his discharge and another time because of his discharging another. This latter had been one of several negro employees, who, when ordered to quit had said that last word of infamy to a man whose mother is virtuous and always has been. Blindly, insanely, Morris had struck at the heap of blackness until they had perforce to carry it to its shanty on the four-handed, wheelless, carriage reserved at every mine for the injured and the dead. That had been but a short while before the strike over his own discharge.

This fellow still lived in a shack Morris had passed near Calabrule's with several of his kind. Three of them, sitting near the door hanging by one hinge of shoe

leather, recognized their former foreman and called to him to share their liquor. He whom Morris had pummeled at *The Effie* leered wickedly without speaking, and turned with an oath to the other participants in the communal "jug." All were much worse for drinking.

In the face of more vital things the incident passed completely out of Morris's mind as he neared Tirrel's and the deep creek flowing gently between the low hills. It came suddenly to the surface when behind him, somewhere in the darkness, he heard a footfall, hurried, uncertain, unsteady. Something living brushed his leg and he started suddenly, and involuntarily uttered an imprecation cut short when his hand found the soft warm hide of Collson's hound.

"You old rascal, Pete!" he said, then, not ungladly: "Come on."

Morris and the dog had almost reached the fence which divides Tirrel's garden from the creek when again there flooded through him the primordial dread of the animal of any species anent some unseen thing in a dark-encompassed place. For anyone to walk the uncertain, unpathed water-edge at that hour was very unusual. He stood and listened and the sound came nearer. He peered through the dark at the dog. Pete was alert but evidently hypnotized. He neither growled nor went cautiously forward as he generally did under similar circumstances. Morris led the dog in courage. He started toward The Thing, but a crawly sensation went along his spine. He stopped after a short distance to listen. It was still coming.

"It's no doubt that miserable nigger," he thought, and bent for a stone, a club, anything, and could find nothing. The Thing stumbled, evidently over a log, then rose and started back.

"He'll get a cold bath if he isn't careful," Morris soliloquized, still standing undecided as to the wisdom of

calling or not. "If I do it may give him the chance he's after, and if I don't he'll certainly get into the creek and drown and I'll feel like a murderer. I'll follow, anyhow."

He went upward along the path down which he had come. Hitherto his steps had been hushed by the grass, dead but quiet under the foot. They were no longer inaudible, and, covering the lesser sound, brought him within arm's length of The Shadower before he was aware of any presence in that exact spot. Her face was just beyond the line of identity, but he knew the form. He grasped her arm roughly.

"My God!" he exclaimed, "what brings you here and at such a time?"

Elizabeth put her hand confidently in his, and with the free one tapped the hound.

"You bad old dog," she said with a reprimand that was nearly all joy, "what made you run so far ahead of me? Didn't you know I might have got lost?"

Her words ended with a tiny burst of mirth at the remote possibility of such a contingency.

"But he's a dandy dog, isn't he, Mr. Morris?" lifting her eyes to the tall form beside her.

"You might have got drowned; I'm not interested in the dog," Eldred brutally observed. Pride and dignity were strong yet, despite the girl's first effort at compromise. He repeated his question, and asked her why she didn't call. To the latter she explained that she wasn't sure of his identity, having lost track of him once or twice on the way from the village, and she didn't want to take any chances. To the first question she replied simply:

"You."

"Me," Morris interrogated; why me?"

"The looks on your face when you passed me without speaking scared me. When you took your hat and coat from the rack something told me you were going to

Colville, and I saw you take something like a revolver from the mantel that scared me still worse, and—and I didn't want—."

Elizabeth's voice broke, and her hand slipped to her own side. Circumstances adverse to him had not, it seemed, taken away all the tenderness she had for the wayward Colville youth.

"You thought I was going to kill—to kill him!" the stronger voice rang out in the silence, "with a silver-plated pipe-case!" He took hold of her arm again. "Well, that's a good one." Then, suddenly stopping in the path, he loosed her arm as if it were hot iron, waiting in silent intimation for her to go on without him. But Elizabeth didn't move nor speak. He broke the pause.

"Then you still care for—er—for a thing like that? care for it so much you would try to stop it from getting what it deserves!" he spoke hurriedly, moving a step beyond her. The girl hung her head.

"Perhaps he—perhaps Amos isn't so bad as—as the letter makes him appear. The money—you know he might not know about it; besides, he's been a creature of circumstances you——."

"A creature of—of hell," the miner blurted, and as quickly begged Elizabeth's pardon and softened his savage outburst by saying that different people of course had different ways of looking at things, "but if I had a sister I'd hate for her to—to think that way toward a man of that caliber."

And all the time Elizabeth remained silent under the incrimination and assumption, her tongue momentarily powerless to resist by lucidly explaining her attitude in that particular premise. Her head was bent while he poured out his vexation in bitterness. Once only she started to expostulate but his voice, stronger and louder with the stress of vehemence and emotion, overwhelmed

her murmuring of apology. He stopped at last, and she told him he did not understand.

"I understand more of that case, and have understood longer, than you have any idea," he insisted, "and I understand all I want to know of it," still wrongly attributing her attitude to sheer obstinacy of nature and weak will, "and I think you had better let me walk ahead of you to see that you get home safely." And suiting the action to the word Eldred Morris strode past her and onto the wider wagon-road leading thence past *The Effie* to the village. In his heart he almost wished it had been the negro.

Docilely Elizabeth followed. The old hound went between them jogging sulkily, his shadow and theirs lying, when the moon came out at intervals, plainly and obliquely across the road. Doubtless in his own doggish way Pete sensed an unusual difficulty, basing his canine hypothesis on the unnecessary amount of air space lying between the two young human forms. He could remember when one chair had done for both, and they had never exhibited any shame in his presence. And, wise in his dog days and generation, as became a good rabbit-hound and the favorite father of so many doggy daughters and sons living in Carbonia and its environs, Pete knew the ways of love were not all peace, as his own long, tooth-torn ears gave evidence, and an occasional predilection to the use of three legs instead of four. He respected these young people's troubles accordingly.

So in this manner man, maid and dog, came at last to the top of the hill. Obviously if there were going to be any talking done that night the girl had to do it. She was out of her element in such repellent attitude and silence; he was in his. But trust the girls to know how to bring the men across the line.

As a starter Elizabeth took the shawl which had thus far covered her head and placed it over her shoulders,

allowing it to drape becomingly in the most approved fashion. She not only looked better but she felt better, and to aid in a desirable consummation the moon came out between two cloud banks just as the man turned to see if the *dog* were in line. And for some reason (perhaps it was because of the coincidence or because it was one itself) the girl smiled back at the man in the moon as he lighted her features after the semi-gloom. That is a combination of circumstances no mere man of between twenty and thirty could be blamed for capitulating to, particularly since Dame Nature, being a pretty shrewd tactician herself in such matters, is on the side of the enemy to further her own ends of preserving the species.

Eldred Morris smiled and the war was ended. Elizabeth added to that, which, in the moonlight made her look entirely ethereal, although of course she wasn't, as we have John Morris's word for it, but Eldred just then thought she was which amounted to the same thing. And Pete, glad of the change of atmosphere, liked the sense of warmth which floated back to him, and in joyful response wagged his long hound-tail.

"You misjudged me, Eldred," she said, again putting her hand on his arm.

"I wasn't judging you—but him"

"That isn't what I mean then," Elizabeth made another attempt.

"Then please explain," he suggested.

So she did, which left Morris more in doubt than before regarding life's devious ways. Elizabeth ended: "And I was afraid you were going to shoot Amos, and——."

"That's what you said before," Morris broke in, "and I think just the same regarding it. Do you think a man that would let a girl like Esther end the way she has after he being the cause of her ruin deserves anything

else? Do you think he's worth the little finger of the woman he killed, Elizabeth? "If you do," he added less vehemently, "your regard for him passes my understanding. The fact that you made a fool's promise——."

Morris broke off suddenly and resumed his former forbidding attitude, while Elizabeth still insisted he misconstrued her.

"It wasn't because—because I wanted—because I didn't want you to do anything as bad as that," she stammered, "I—it was because I didn't want them to hang *you*!" she managed to blurt out at last with a little shudder of fear that shook the shawl from her petite shoulders, and——.

But now, dear reader, what difference does it make to us what followed? Haven't you in your time done the same? or if you haven't at least we hope you have the most honorable and earnest intentions of so committing yourself soon; indeed we do.

And when it happen we hope the dog accompanying you and him will be a descendant of our own wise Carbonian hound, and as shrewd in his day as Pete was in his. Nothing that had transpired thus far had escaped him; neither did this. That something out of the ordinary was afoot was patent even to his doggish sense when young ladies—usually well dressed—failed to be solicitous of their apparel, and let their shawls fall unheeded to the ground. So, considering the matter for a moment, Pete decided to stand guard that the shawl shouldn't run away, which he may have mistaken as part of his usual police duty.

"And what if I had intended to go there?" Eldred asked while setting the shawl in its correct place.

"I intended to stop you," Elizabeth whispered ever so bravely—now—looking up into the dark eyes which glinted beams of love above her, and presently smiled at the presumption.

"You!" he exclaimed, but derision had no part therein for love and joy had crowded it out.

"Yes, I," she explained, voice somewhat plaintive, sad, "for it could do no good, but much harm where there is already too much. You're needed to do good, so am I," she philosophied wisely, nestling close to him as they went slowly along the broad road, "all of us. I went in before I came here and—and told our people all about it," she added cheerily, "and mamma she—and, but I've got a plan which we can all help in, regarding Esther's baby and other matters," she added definitely, having barely avoided the shoals and the mental ships she had witnessed in the brief space at home that night. We heard later through Sophy that Effie Wilkes had developed some sort of acute indigestion which Hilman feared might turn to nervous prostration, and for some days no one was allowed to visit her room. But Time, which has a specific for mental wounds, healed Effie Wilkes's, in what manner remains for other parts of this story to tell.

There was quite an early convention at the big house next morning which ended in Elizabeth and Mary MacDonald starting for Pittsburg. Where there are ten or eleven one mite extra is scarcely noticed, but trouble only was to be the MacDonald's portion. So far as money can assure the future of any child the future of Esther's baby was assured.

Evidently the parties having the child were only too glad to get rid of it, particularly to two rural ladies bearing such good credentials. Perhaps had their intentions been less honorable, their papers less perfect, the little foundling might have been as willingly turned over to their harsh or tender mercies? Let us hope not. Also let us pray that a humane people will always see to it that "The Will of God," insofar as it concerns adding to the punishment already endured in unwilling entrance

upon such unfortunate premise, may not be construed as sanction to thrust such dear, tiny, helpless little boys and girls, against whom neither God nor Man may lay crime other than that of being unwillingly born, like mongrel puppies into indiscriminate hands.

For twenty-four hours everyone interested stood on the tip-toe of expectancy. We were talking of it on the steps of the big house when Wilkes first descried the two women coming along the path this side of Calabre's. They walked from the station, because we could not be sure which train they would come on. Elizabeth's hat was, as we saw when she came nearer, nearer her shoulder than her head, the living bundle lying snuggled tightly against the virginal breast. Mary MacDonald, to whom that phase of human labor had grown trite, was content to let the younger woman act the matron for that day at least.

And, as we have seen many a happy mother in play with her own, the girl's hair was tousled by the strong wind, but she came on joyfully regardless, trying to lift the long end of the shawl enwrapping the baby in greeting to us at the house. Roger Wilkes's eyes were moist and his voice tremulous as he turned to Turley and said:

"She'll make a fine mother to her own, someday, I hope, Sam, but not to a Rummel—never! No, not for a thousand mines!!"

The one time miner shivered, whether in contemplation of the possibilities just escaped as by a miracle or with the cold one may only assume. "God," he said, yet he spoke to Turley, "that was a close shave for my girl, and we'll find someway out without—that—you bet"

* * * * *

A number of circumstances combined to bring about a realization of that prophecy, not the least among them the fact that The United States was emerging from

chaotic panic into excited prosperity for some at least. The mining investment pendulum swung from one extreme to the other. Through a maze of detail and investigations, and options, and what not, which we refrain from inflicting on the reader, *The Effie* came eventually into its own as the largest of a string of mines owned by a stock company of which in the end Roger became President, and, following his graduation as Mining Engineer, Eldred Morris was given the position as General Superintendent or General Manager, as you please, and Chief Mining Engineer, please you or no.

These Morris was in fact as well as name, and was determined to become such before offering Elizabeth Wilkes his name. We may assume that Mrs. Effie's attitude following the incidents just related had not a little to do with this decision on the part of Eldred and Elizabeth. And while the latter was eagerly and persistently endeavoring to obtain her own degree, with much detriment to her health in the later months, the new General Superintendent of The Wilkes Coal Company took advantage of almost unlimited opportunity to change, as fast as was possible for him so to do, many ills which had previously borne heavily, sometimes on employer and employee alike. In the meantime the company's activities extended to a recently purchased mine in an adjoining state whence followed not only some of our officials but at least a few of our men. And since what happened there is also part of this history we also must follow them.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHERE AMERICANS ARE FOREIGNERS IN THEIR OWN LAND

From Carbonia to The Elkhorn is a goodly step, but the miner, ever seeking a better berth, travels in seven-league boots. To the newly-acquired mine in West Virginia Eldred Morris traveled when occasion demanded or opportunity offered, just as MacDonald had been sent before to act as superintendent of the latest acquisition, because "Miner and Shipper" and mere "Miner" seek the same end by different means.

MacDonald's family had not yet gone for reasons later mentioned; a few of Carbonia's people had for reasons already mentioned: to escape a crowded mine in Pennsylvania to get into a still worse mess in another state by the same cause. For the good mine—where Nature has dealt delightfully in the way of an easily-procured and thick vein and dry, is, paradoxically, quite often the poorest for making money, except in certain cases where unlimited cars are provided certain men: "free turn" the miner calls it when he doesn't call it something worse. The latter depends of course whether he's a Dominic or a Pietrecco.

Thus, even prosperity has its lights and shadows, as Charles and Margaret Farley found when the former, tired of much shoveling and small pay as boiler-fireman, left the company's old mine for the newly-purchased one in another field. Also other unexpected things which we must now relate, not the least from Margaret's point of view being the difference in environment, in people, and the houses themselves.

As her husband and the euphonious Clifford Adams and young wife had done Margaret had voluntarily taken pot-luck despite partly pessimistic letters coming from The Elkhorn to our village. A gleam of prospective betterment shone through the gloom—lighted as much by a woman's love as the information conveyed in crude spelling that the vein there was of extraordinary thickness and excellence, the combination needing only sufficient rolling-stock supplied to each miner to assure him pay of unusual bulk. Yet this latter not as yet forthcoming Farley urged Margaret to stay a while in the vine-clad cottage of the crippled Thomas near our village, with the babe recently born to them.

"The houses here is worse than the bachin shanties at Carboneyer," and more awful things he told her. But the womanly imagination leaped the wooded hills and rested on the lone "batcher" on The Lick Branch, and her heart grew hungry for the young miner she had ever loved else she had not married him when her choice had been profuse, taking in the now General Superintendent and Chief Engineer himself—almost.

Thus she wrote, and he answered that his choice was limited to one house, all the others, poor as they were, being occupied. In his own way he described it and its environment. She didn't care. "Take it if it's built right over a coke oven," she said, and meant it.

It wasn't exactly as bad as that, but pretty nearly in location at least. And in every way it was a poor one compared with what the young Carbonian matron had been used to, dirty and smelly of its former un-American occupants. Margaret soon transformed that part of it. A week after her furniture got there the inside was cheerful with red-and-white table-cloth and polished stove, and a floor uncarpeted except the "best" room, so clean that being hungry enough one could have eaten from it without repugnance.

There Margaret's efforts ended. For the rest it was much drafty in the wrong places, and the raw winds of even a West Virginian Autumn swirled coldly along the Elkhorn and whipped savagely into The Lick. Also it was dark, this branch, so narrow the space eroded at this point that scarce a hundred yards lay between the varying base lines. The view from the windows encompassed an unlovely tipple and the inevitable string of railroad cars.

And if at night you sat with wife and child on the stoop the wind would smother you with sulphuric fumes from the "bee-hive" coke ovens near the railroad, and send you indoors coughing. The negro and the "guinny" are easily satisfied, and the coal trade deals harshly with employer as well as employee at times, urging the place of utmost economy as the best. If the village at the new mine bought by The Wilkes Company were any criterion times must have been indeed cruelly unkind to the employer when homes were set there for the men. Of course there is always this consolation: if the American or Anglo-Saxon miner do not like it he has the constitutional right to stay away, or, if there, to leave. And to the eternal credit of that related tribe be it said that they generally do, if not officials. In that case their lot is better.

* * * * *

In their new environment Charles and Margaret Farley were "outlanders." They were native Americans foreigners in their own land. He did not agree with his labor, or the lack of it, to be more precise. The eternal gamble of the miner was going against him. With the exception of Minnie Adams, who lived at the farther end of the row, Margaret did not like her neighbors. But both in houses and work Clifford Adams was more fortunate than the later arrival from Carbonia. He was a driver, hence sure of a full day's pay when the mine

worked. But Margaret and Farley had each other and the baby, and where love is there optimism regarding the future is never quite dead.

The child's coming had been eagerly welcomed, but the incident and its result increased the balance against the miner at a time when he could ill afford the burden, for the fact that the doctor's service at Carbonia was covered by a nominal monthly fee, small indeed compared with its benefits, was to a large extent nullified by after events. Farley's rating at the company-store which, with its stock of all kinds of things needed by the miners, was part of the property when The Wilkes Company took possession, was decidedly low. As day followed day with no immediate prospect of betterment the miner chafed in his working-place, and quite often suggested a move.

"We're runnin' the line clost to the limit," he told her, then, with a faint hope, "but I heered young Morris is expectin' to come an' it'll maybe be better after; he's to be here soon. As it is they's lots of the diggers as is worse off than us a lot. Some of 'em cant get a sack of flour if they was dyin' fer it until they get a car to load. They'll foller it out in a pinch, then after it's dumped get it in grub. They'n sure to be in again time enough fer the next. We aint come to that yit, but——."

The abstract weighed heavily on Farley. He sensed its possibilities to the little family in a strange land; Margaret did not. Her chief concern lay in her lap, and the weather was cold. She snuggled the little lad close to her breast and suggested that they try to hold out "Till Spring comes, anyway."

They waited, but in such a house even the warmth of mother-love and lots of coal did not keep the child from getting pneumonia. They weathered that storm and the boy lived, but there were times before it was over when the miner-father would have bartered part of his life-

blood for things they needed and could not get had any-one desired the exchange. There wasn't then; there was later.

Following the illness Margaret's boy didn't thrive as well as he had done before. From a small country town some miles away came the doctor with the suggestion that it "might possibly be that the *peculiar atmosphere* incidental to a deep, narrow, valley filled with coke-ovens always burning had something to do with it."

"'Peculiar atmosphere' is th' only thing there's plenty of round here, an' niggers an' guinnies," the miner mimicked the doctor aside to Margaret, after having told the former he could not pay him for the visit just then. "If we only had what was throwed away at that fool chris-tenin' in the top block yesteray . . . if we only had . . ." the man's mind retaining unspoken comparisons odious and tormenting—to him. Nor did they illumine for this unsophisticated American toiler the secret of "guinny" living and thriving on what he and Margaret and the baby would starve.

In December the child grew decidedly worse, and the parents were under necessity of procuring medical attention again. The sense of security this trip gave to the father and mother was well worth the cost. Their baby boy was in no danger, but the doctor suggested that he be immediately weaned. Also that his mother's milk be replaced by a certain food procurable—so he was pleased to advise—at the company's store lower down the *ravine*. Casually he stated its price, and wondered at the sudden change of color in Margaret's face: change from pink and white to white without pink. Wrongly attributing he referred directly but delicately to his surmise with regard to her condition, which promptly brought the colors trooping to their accustomed place in the young matron's cheeks.

After that Farley's desire to earn a sufficing wage grew

poignant to the point of desperation. For hours he would sit where the pit-wagon road passed his chamber, reiterating with pitiful monotony the eternal question of the larger, more easily-procured vein:

"Car fer me this time, Cliff?" Then, on the mule-driver's return down the heading: "Car next time, Adams?"

And as the day waned and the driver's nonchalant "No" became a bored headshake Farley's aggressive, independent, spirit of the morning waned with it, fading at length almost to an appeal. Then in the reaction came to his young eyes a wicked, reckless, gleam: the subtle sign of something overwhelming enough to grapple with man, death or the devil if the wrestling with either meant an extra dollar for the woman and the child in the house across the narrow creek.

When night came Margaret from her window could tell almost without fail good news from bad by his dragging step or agile. Strange, too, the harder had been the toil the more spring in his step: outward sign of inward exultation over this glorious American privilege of simply having all the work desired. On such days the elation of spirit made the strides fewer in reaching home.

CHAPTER XX.

LAWS POLYMORPHIC

As the holiday month came toward its closing days each miner took the utmost of his toll. That man had to be very ill indeed who allowed a car to pass him unclaimed during that pay which was for Christmas disbursement. Farley's steps grew heavier. Each night he and Margaret deducted from his total due that which the company would do for him in reality later on: "House rent," "Powder," "Oil," "Blacksmithing," "Sundries," which latter included the sack of flour and the box of matches. And in spite of the most rigorous economy on the part of Margaret the family account was still such as to preclude all possibility of obtaining the desired preparation for the child.

When one's pay was overdrawn the veriest trifle from the drug department was not among the permissibles allowed by the genial storekeeper.

"The company draws the line on fancy grub for the kid," he advised said "kid's" father with a placidity engendered by frequent repetition along several lines. And after Farley had explained he was a little more explicit but quite as obdurate.

"Guess that's what helped bust the other company up . . . we can't think of it for a minute. But," after a moment's consideration, "if youns know the new manager when he comes he might—what he says goes."

That was poor consolation for Farley, and he persisted in thinking of it before Morris came, seeing his little one getting thinner every day when he should have

been taking on baby flesh. In the end he compromised by depriving himself of the food essential to a physical worker. Margaret he would not allow to economize.

"If the baby's weaned you've still got two to feed," he iterated the doctor sagely, meanwhile remarking with a sad pleasure the mother's eyes dance with an altogether unalloyed anticipation, her cheeks the color of a pink peony.

Already they called it a girl. It should be Little Margaret, just as the boy was Little Charley.

"An' we want 'em both, don't we Maggie?" he asked her, and her eyes and smiling face affirmed his question. Then, looking where she looked, upon the living composite of her own fairness and his, a sudden stress of passionate emotion seized him, and with his two calloused hands on her fair cheeks he bent back her head and kissed her.

For them this was the only way. From their parents these two simple lovers learned to expect and acquiesce in sacrifices in the raising of future Americans, and to be calmly heroic without hope of State or National reward or any plaudits of the multitude. Neither in their remote state knew they aught of uptilted noses and uttered contempt. In Eden they have not yet learned the paradoxical secret of taking life and keeping it: Motherhood is not passing into desuetude: the great tragedies of life are fairly met. Charles Farley gave of his strength much he could ill spare that the children of his loins and hers might live and thrive. And he grew keener as he grew thin, with an increase in the primal instinct of the male in search of food for its offspring.

So Christmas passed. The new mine of The Wilkes Coal Company had been idle for the holiday, but quickly resumed after.

"There's sure ter be a good day ter-morrer; the niggers an' the guinnies is still a-boozin', an' MacDonald's

had the pit-boss give me a better place," the miner calmly adduced as the tag-end of much news brought up with the mail from the store. "Mac's expectin' Morris any time now, an' he thinks it'll be better after he comes this time."

Margaret sat reading a late copy of *Colville Weekly News* which the home folks had sent with a few presents just as welcome as if on time. In the familiar sheet were the weekly budget of Carbonia's news and the dissertations of local conditions from all the surrounding country. Specifically of interest to Margaret was the statement that Uncle Enoch Collson was laid up temporarily with an attack of "wheezles," a Carbonian synonym for miner's asthma, and that John Morris and wife Emily expected to eat Christmas dinner at Mary MacDonald's in Colville. To this latter was appended a semi-facetious suggestion of the corresponding book-keeper at *The Effie*, preceded by the statement that Mrs. MacDonald expected to join her husband in the South as soon as she gained strength after the coming of this latest brother of Bobbie Burns.

"This being the twelfth or thirteenth young citizen given by Mr. and Mrs. MacDonald to Colville and Vicinity, we would suggest that an appropriate appreciation of this fact could be well shown by our General Manager transferring our friend Mac's superintendency from the wilds of Virginia to that position soon to be vacated by Mr. Turley, who it is expected will look after the surface alone, and leave a younger man take care of the underground affairs."

Obviously the article was inspired, for it continued:

"School facilities are a vital concern to a family like Superintendent MacDonald's, and we hear Carbonia will soon have one equal almost to Colville if The General Manager's plans carry."

Followed the information that Mr. and Mrs. Roger

Wilkes were entertaining Mrs. Wilkes's brother and wife, but that the festivities were dimmed somewhat no doubt by the fact of Miss Elizabeth still being away. Then came the news of a fatal accident at *The Effie*, followed immediately by the tidbit of rumor delectable even in the Land of Coal, to the effect that if all was true that one heard in Carbonia and Colville wedding bells were to ring shortly after Miss Elizabeth returned from a world tour with a party of friends from Colville. This latter, it stated for the benefit of those who might not be conversant with the facts, had been undertaken, on the advice of a specialist, after her graduation," and interested Margaret so she had to ask her husband to repeat what he had said.

Farley was smoking, his feet propped against the fireplace. The baby was asleep. Feeling in his pockets for a match he yawned, stretched his long arms up to the ceiling as he rose languidly, and said he guessed he'd go in and try the new place by getting a string of holes ready. Instead of this being the news she asked it was the tail-end and result of what she had not heard. The miner said it as a man does to whom the idea comes after much pondering over the thing one is about to do. But he tried to hide this from Margaret and spoke firmly, as one not afraid.

"There'll be lots o' cars ter-morrer, sure," he gave as his belief the second time, "an' I can shoot 'em without diggin' if I have 'em ready."

Margaret turned to him, languidly differing with his intent. Her eyes looked up into his searchingly and saw only determination.

"Charley," she said, "aint you afraid? you know the laws says that aint allowed." The Mining Code had no

state lines in Margaret's mind. She referred to Pennsylvania.*

The man laughed, a low, contemptuous chuckle, and, setting his pipe down again raised his clenched fists to the once white-washed and now nondescript-colored boards above. He let them fall to his sides with a relaxed sigh.

"I hate it worse'n hell at night: wisht I'd knowed sooner, I'd done it yesterday if it was Christmas. I'd rather sleep."

In a moment he had changed shirts and was slipping off his trousers when the protective instinct of the woman urged her to suggest caution.

"You might get sent up, Charley, like them men young Morris sent to Little Washington for solid-shootin'?"

The sentence was uttered tentatively; the answer terse and final and a challenge to laws obnoxious. "The hell!" he said.

Slipping on his overalls he continued: "They'd better mind it themsel's first . . . an' not wink at comp'ny men breakin' it when it pays . . . An' that's a fac', Maggie," he persisted in face of her doubt. "An' anyway the pit-boss can't be lookin' after every shot as is fired, an' the state inspector don't come round on'y about every three months unless somebody's killed."

"Well, you'd think they'd be smarter an' get one for each mine or two," Margaret suggested philosophically, hugging the baby to her breast and rocking it to and fro.

"Cost too much," came the laconic answer, as Farley bent under a part of the stairs forming something like a little closet.

"As much as the men that's left to do as they've a

*West Virginia has quite as good laws now: it had not then. They were broken as readily, however, where they were actually on the statutes as where only existing in Margaret Farley's mind.

mind an' gets killed a-doin' it, Charley?" Margaret looked into the fire-place, seeing pictures in the coals of tragedy known and expected.

"Yes, lots more," the miner responded, slipping a black steel keg behind the door ready to pick up when he should leave. "They don't cost the comp'ny nothin'—yit; it's on'y the widders an' kids as cost—somebody. But p'rhaps the state'll do like Jack Morris says someday, Maggie, make it cheaper to keep 'em alive to work than to kill 'em," and his voice rang with a laugh that sent shivers of dread anticipation down Margaret's spine. "But——" Farley snapped his words short and stopped at that.

"What?" his wife insisted.

The miner proceeded to fill his oil-bottle in silence.

"Nothin'," he snapped, and thrust the greasy vessel into a still greasier pocket. He lighted his lamp and lifted the powder-keg beneath his arm. The twenty-five pounds of dry deadly grains rattled ominously within the thin fluted steel, and drew the woman's notice to this second infraction her husband intended. She spoke mildly.

"Are you goin' to do that, too, Charley?"

"Why not?" the black eyes flashed; "this aint *Th' Effie*. I seen the comp'ny men with four or five of 'em at the partin' tother day, an' half a box o' dynamite with caps an' fuse in the same box an' all of it in the pit-car with the men . . . goin' to that new partin' they'n shootin' down."

Margaret said no more; neither do we. Why, indeed, should not she and Farley take when they could a share in the illegal spoils? They needed it worse than many who did. If an explosion—dust or gas—should by any chance occur, the "doctors" would inevitably disagree and, the patients being dead, none refute. "Atmospheric changes" sounds more technical than "criminal careless-

ness" and is more misleading to The Public than the latter, which is fortunate indeed since it is The Public on whom—compensation or no compensation—the ultimate burden must fall. Find yourself in a quandary to explain criminal disobedience or criminal carelessness in a way to leave you foot-free, inject into the average jury (which doesn't know even which of carbonic acid or marsh gases explodes) testimony utterly abstract and bewildering and they be glad to let it go at that and forget all about the protective rider they had intended to insert.

"Well, be careful, Charley," Margaret admonished, just as she had done each time Farley left her for the mine since their marriage. And quite as perfunctorily the miner answered with a smile:

"I will, Maggie; you take care of yourself."

He bent to kiss her before going, then went to the parlor, if one may term it such, to kiss the baby now sleeping in the parental bed. The downstairs had to serve for bedroom also, since that bearing the name upstairs was uninhabitable for a dog in Winter. Returning, Farley stood undecided for a moment with his hand still on the door-knob, and both broke into a smile at this open exhibition of the conflict going on within him. But it was only regarding one thing:

"I wisht I'd known," he said again; "I hate it worse'n hell at night; I'd ruther sleep," his thin lips compressed as he went out into the dark.

"I'll bet he would," Margaret's face lighted with tenderness and solicitation. She listened until she heard his footsteps crossing the planks across the narrow creek flowing down the narrow valley-bottom. Then she undressed and went to bed with his son.

CHAPTER XXI. AND LAW THAT IS NOT

Farley returned about three and went in again with the first driver. It was futile to go in before else he would have remained in all night. All he could do without empty wagons was done, according to the locally-accepted rule and against The Mine Laws as Farley and almost every American miner at least knows them to be either expressed or implied: tentative or existing. On the wall, framed and in a glass, he had read many a time at *The Effie*: "The miner shall properly undermine his coal, and shall use care where and how he places his shots . . ." Farley had done this latter in six holes out of seven, which is a fair record. The former he had not done at all.

In each of these holes, or such of them as he might need, he had anticipated the need of considerable powder, which he would insert as each preceding shot was cleaned up. This, obviously, could be at best but an approximate estimate of the need. Some trivial change in the direction of the bore which might in all likelihood be overlooked by the miner busied with loading, shooting, and a hundred other matters, might tear today to smithereens, and send a shower of roaring, crashing, coal like ten thousand grape-shot into the open places, that which but yesterday under similar circumstances (apparently) pushed the black layer gently out as you would your piano from the wall. Or, happen the boring moved to right or left, the result would be, perhaps, a hole like a huge horizontal pot and a deafening concussion, but no coal to load for your pains!

These miniature explosions of course lift trillions of carbon atoms from the mine-floor, dry and dusty to excessiveness, and set them floating in the moving air. An unpropitious circumstance in the form of fire projected into the mass from some source at the proper moment and the mass burns like so much powder.

Farley saw none of these possibilities. Like death such things always somehow just missed you and struck your neighbor. What was concrete to the miner was the empty wagon coming as fast as he could by the most rapid work fill it! That was positive; the other possible only. He worked feverishly as a different miner coming suddenly onto a rich pocket of gold nuggets. And each car to Farley was worth almost a little one.

He worked as one does who finds he has but so long in which to "make his stake." Twice he had fired, and twice without unusual incident the explosive had splendidly pushed the little hill of loose coal ready for his shovel to transfer to the car. The nearest fresh air passing him was some thirty feet away. The intervening space was filled with a stifling mixture of smoke from his lamp and shots. In this Farley's light swung on his cap like a dark red ball after each firing, his figure utterly obliterated in the thick fog.

As he worked his broad-bladed shovel would fan some of it out, and leave him, ultimately, just barely discernible from the roadway along which the driver hauled his cars. Then another shot would thicken it all over again.

* * * * *

When noon came Farley held pie with one hand and threw lumps of coal into the drummy bottom of the car with the other. He was weaker than usual but not hungry, therefore he ate only that part of his dinner which aggravated his disorder. About an hour before dinner a violent headache set in and swept the usually keen appetite away. Dusty, smoke-begrimed, as an old-time cannoneer, he toiled and sweated, his lungs smart-

ing with irritation due to the foul pungency. Through it all he never once thought of stopping, for each hour meant another dollar for Margaret and the boy.

During the waning afternoon he often grew thirsty, a contingency provided for by Margaret out of much past experience with her brothers. This desire for cold, weak, tea took him back to his tool-box snuggled against the coal pillar protecting the heading. On a flat stone near the box, but still closer the wooden-rail track leading from the heading to the room-face, lay two brass checks. Ten he had placed there in the morning! He had still time to fire and possibly fill out another shot, which, granting him luck, would use up the remaining checks and make a record the greatest by three times of any he had reached since coming here.

A fleeting picture crossed his mental vision, and a warm thrill went through him. Wouldn't home and Margaret and the boy be a gladsome combination that night! Then the thought: "The niggers an' the guin-nies—most of 'em'll be in ter-morrer, an' all the cars I'll get'll be one an' maybe none."

It had about the same effect on Farley as a cold wet blanket dabbed suddenly on a fevered back. He dropped the top section of his pail awry across the bottom, raised the lid of his box for wrapping paper, rolled a cartridge on a long, round stick, tucked in one end and sought the powder. He wrenched off the small tin disc covering the outlet in the keg—his regular five-pound can being empty. Finger crooked in the hole he lifted it to his knee and poured the paper full. Then another and yet another and all the time his naked light swung on his cap above the black stream of death flowing with a grainy-rattle into the paper. The possibility of a spark dropping but lent zest and hurry to the operation. He knew The Law, for had he not often read in large print placed carefully behind the glass at *The Effie*:

"Where naked lights are used the miner shall place his lamp not less than four feet from . . . with flame blowing away . . ."

Farley stopped for a moment and listened, but without regard to Laws that bloom not to wholesome fruit behind glass alone. The wagons were coming behind the long chain-pillars in the distance. He hurried the preliminaries of blasting. By the time he had the shot ready Adams would be shouting for him to come. He set down the keg, not appreciably lighter than when he took it up, forgetting to replace the stopper. It stood directly in the line of fire.

Up at the face he rammed the powder home, thrust into it the iron "needle." With one hand swinging the tamper he used the other to throw slack into the hole with a precision gained only by much practice. This finished, he flung the bar back along the rib and from behind his ear pulled a squib. The rumble in the heading ceased and a voice at the opening called:

"Here's a car, Duck!"

He answered: "Alright, Cliff!" at the same moment lifting from his cap the naked light and touched its hazy flame to the wax-like sulphur. Then he ran, calling as he went the miner's warning when a shot is lit:

"Fire!!"

Farley lighted the squib short to gain the explosion sooner and thereby facilitate the car's loading, turned an abrupt corner and—waited.

* * * * *

In his haste Farley had leaned the bore too far into the solid coal. The State had not yet at that mine placed responsible men to do that work alone and unhurried by aught else. Neither had the new company got around to that mine yet in that respect as Morris had sometime before done at *The Effie*. All such vital reforms were of course a matter of contemplation. Eldred Morris's prospective trip had many such changes in view, but Fate

awaits no man's opportunity, since it carries out its own purposes strictly on time.

The width of coal at the back of Farley's shot was more than at the front, and the amount of powder measured accordingly. Under such circumstances it is possible no amount of explosive would have done other than this did: repulse its burden by blowing out (the "blown-out shot" so frequently mentioned in newspapers following explosions) and tearing as it came the coal along the drill-hole. Perhaps in the full length of it there would be loosened a bushel or two of atomic carbon, the whole transformed by the ignited powder into a whizzing, sizzling, mass, cleaving the blackness before it, and forcing open heavy doors hundreds of yards away, with a detonation in that narrow space straining the ear-drums to the point of fracture.

Its first single note was like a monster rifle-crack, high-scaled, its fiery tongue leaping in search of food. In the open keg it found it, even as it had found more between the face and the box in the form of dust. Then on it went rioting in an ocean of black atoms, its slurring unsated cadences bellowing into the longer stretches of open work, quivering, rising, ever searching with demoniacal hiss as it found food to the right, dying with a deep low woof!—woof!! as it ate the last vestige of oxygen in the abandoned workings to the left.

And with a ten-fold furnace glare it lighted the great open places made by gravitation with a death-brilliance weird as intensest hell, rolling on and on in huge red-dish-black billows of flame, forced now by its own expansion on the interior to seek a larger place in the greater world, leaving its "farewell" with each underground subject loyal or disloyal, obedient or disobedient alike, in the cruel mark of The Greater Law, without mercy as to ignorance, without cruelty as to intent . . . It is The Law . . . The Law must be fulfilled! and, knowing this, when will men learn?

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CALVARY OF COAL-LAND

Margaret had coaxed and sugar-tittied the child to sleep. It was three o'clock and Farley would soon be home, perhaps. The comparative security of early American mining life was receiving here and there rude shocks of awakening which threatened to break its defences beyond remedy if the dread thing continued. Thousands of sensitive hearts leaped at every unusual sound. The immunity of even the non-gaseous mine had been questioned of late by The Administrator of The Greater Law. Equally with their sisters in Pennsylvania the women of The Lower Field were wearing under this double burden of Nature's wrath against disobedience and their own's carelessness.*

For our men it is soon over. For our wives and mothers, our sisters and our sweethearts, the poignant fear is ever present. Beneath an optimism, without which they would sink utterly beneath the burden, the ineffable dread tears at their tender hearts. And the administration here is quite as impartial as underground. Dread, like his brother Death, takes no heed of velour and bric-

*The period covered by our story was the most agonizing ever experienced in American mining, or any other. Disaster followed disaster in horrifying frequency, taking as toll in each case from a few lives to hundreds. Harwick, Darr, Monogah, Marianna are but a few instances of this black era in American mining history. Yet, happy we are to state that these thousands of strong men did not give their lives in vain. Public Opinion—ever the most potent factor in reform—aided men of Eldred and John Morris's type to bring about the comparative safety our men enjoy today. Explosions grow less and less frequent.

a-brac. The feminine heart covered by crepe de chine flutters similarly and from similar cause as that beneath cheap percale.

Margaret started supper's preparation. In a few minutes she placed a pan of potatoes in the hot oven. At varying intervals during the afternoon her eyes sought the tipple and the crossing across the creek.

It was with an eager curiosity she saw General Manager Morris come from the mine accompanied by Superintendent MacDonald, and recalled with pardonable pride one night in the hall at Carbonia when, to the tune of "The Devil's Dream" and "Money Musk," played in medley on Donald's fiddle, she had held the now General Manager's hand and he her waist, and said that which made her heart beat high.

She had watched him tack up a paper on the pit-mouth, which, could she have read from that distance she would have found very much like one he had affixed on the most public place at *The Effie*, stating, briefly, that from thence-forward only sufficient men would be kept to fill the contract, and those preferably English-speaking and married. This, he hoped, would give all who lived in the hamlet a living wage. It referred also to certain dangerous conditions which a special corps of men would be employed to overcome, insofar as possible, by examining and firing all shots and wetting the places beforehand, and other matters looking to the safety of the men and the happiness of their families.

Margaret eyed him closely as he and MacDonald passed almost by her window. Thence they went up the hillside along a path ending at a far more beautiful and healthful home than Margaret's, soon to be occupied by Mrs. MacDonald, it was thought. When she turned to the oven a shadow of tiniest regret flickered across her face, but only for a moment. She sought her baby and nearly killed him in the squeezing iteration that she was

satisfied, and envied no other woman on earth. Then again she sought the window and looked up toward the mine. Men came out but none of them her own.

Love is not blind always. Even at that distance Margaret could easily distinguish her husband from his fellows, although many of the American type were alike as two-year-old hickorys. She waited, since there was nothing else to do, her loving heart a-flutter with anticipation of a good day for Farley.

She flew to the little cupboard and took out a tiny roast. This she set to share the heat with the pan of potatoes. A few minutes later the room was redolent with the odor of her cooking, and Margaret was standing with eyes set on the path down which Farley would come.

Perhaps an hour later she had placed the meat and potatoes on the back of her stove to keep warm. Farley was over-long that night, which added positiveness to mere assumption regarding the amount he would have earned. Yet as the minutes passed the mild anxiety grew a little. He might be the only man in a long stretch of workings. A fall of slate might have pinned him to the mine floor and he calling right then for help which came not. Perhaps he had started out and got in the dark, and, finding his matches all gone wandered into abandoned portions of the mine and by then was smothered with the heavy gas common to such places? Such things had happened within her memory, and the thought of them recurred under the least provocation to torment her.

Margaret tried hard to quell her fears, but they grew as time passed. She sang to the baby to compose it and herself, walking often to the window from whence she had plain view of the mine-mouth and the ravine beyond it. She was standing there, as she had been many a time when he had waved at her from the little bridge,

when along the thin valley there went a deep rumble as if lightning had flashed on The Elkhorn, and its thunderous echoes traveled over onto The Lick.

Then a great streak of flame and black, thick, smoke shot from the hole on the ravine's other side and reached nearly to the scrub-brush on the opposite hill. There it died almost instantly among the tangled growth, its passing marked only by a great cloud rising and moving upward to the mountain top. Followed that silence then, running men and shrieking women.

Later, Dark Night spread her sable wings for the second time in mercy over it all. The first night there had been confusion: this night the peace of death. Deep, wide shadows which lay over The Elkhorn and more narrow along the Lick valleys reflected themselves in many a woman's heart. From Farley's to the hill's propinquitous slope the pallid moon in pity obliterated the breeze-swung emblems of The Protectors' passing.

Without the closed doors the cold winds blew in moaning sympathy with many a Margaret Farley and her boy, picking up and mingling with its own dirge the uncommon multiplicity as it swirled from this tenement to that, and lost itself finally in the far reaches of the sullen night.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE AGITATOR'S WIFE

The term "miner," as it appears in "Roger Wilkes, Miner and Shipper of Coal," and "Roger Wilkes: Miner," is not synonymous, as even the non-mining reader is aware. But your acquaintance with our craft in this premise being assumed as simply generic you will forgive, we believe, incidental and necessary explanation purposed only to illuminate the better for the general reader not familiar with mines and mining people this story of life in the land of coal. The fact that our friends of Carbonia play each his or her part in the great drama is all the apology we offer.

Following the happening just recorded in the previous chapter the new mine was placed on the same basis of equity and safety as the old, with the best of results. Some of our old friends came back to Carbonia: MacDonald with joy and Margaret with joy and sorrow. Turley had been appointed as "Outside Superintendent." His activities, except on rare occasions when called on, were therefore confined to the surface. A new man took MacDonald's place and the big Scot came to *The Effie* as "Underground Superintendent." A graded school and a new home built specially for the mine superintendent's use brought all the little Donalds back from Colville: which proved the happiest day in Bobbie Burns's life. He and Collson's Pete celebrated it by catching a polecat, and Mary MacDonald by burning Bobbie's clothing and putting him in the coal house until the stink died down.

In another spot the home-coming from Virginia was nearly all sorrow. Margaret, as many another of our girls, left the parental roof a bride, alone; came back to it a widow and not herself only. And aside from this, life in the settlement following the induction of Esther's baby was far from being one sweet song. In the great coal fields life rarely gets monotonous for employer or employee. There come peaceful spells, of course, in which both forces rest on their arms and await the next onslaught of the enemy: natural or human, but it is the stillness preceding the storm.

Being thus always of The Craft life could never show to the Wilkes's a trail other than tortuous. Even the semi-illusion with which The Past ever envelopes its scenes, its tragedies, transforming the serio-comical to farcical and tragedy to melo-drama, failed to make it other than it was. For them the journey covered upwards of a generation and had jagged and torn at every turn. The change, to others almost imperceptible, had been always full of violent eruptions: mental and physical: one or more characterizing each step up the industrial mountain. Ask the miner and he would tell you earnestly the path were rose-lined, and the competency at the end reached easily as duck slides to water.

The miner at *The Effie*, however, with one or two exceptions, may be pardoned if he prove too busy to turn back with us the pages representing a quarter century nearly, to that point where the conversation of two men resulted in divergent lines in the lives of several of our people. Not being present he knew naught of a brother's solicitude which prompted Samuel Turley to suggest to his intimate friend, Enoch Collson, that it seemed to him Wilkes was naturally meant for the employing side of the mining fence, "but somehow missed his footing at the start."

"Nay, my friend," Collson objected, "it's a ch'ice be-

tween two things with a man like Roger: either he keeps on spoutin' to suit the men or movin' to suit the masters, or starts somethin' on his own hook an' flops to t'other side."

Collson had flung away the wet "heel" from his pipe and proceeded leisurely to fill it, continuing his summing up regarding his and Turley's mutual friends: Effie and Roger Wilkes.

"It ain't the man as has the gift o' gab like that as suffers, Turley; it's the women . . . it's him a-draggin' that little mite of his around from this place to that an' stoppin' long at none of 'em . . . that's the idee. But once let him have a pit of his own, Turley; let him have a pit of his own! Oh, no," Collson poised the burning match until it burned almost through the tip of a calloused finger, while he let his eyes rove along the unlovely frame of Phillip's *Number Four*, and thence to the great wooden hulk of a tipple, "not one like this at the start. I mean a little un of a car a day or thereabouts," the miner's voice raised to overcome the great sound of the black lumps pouring into the steel pan. "An' I've one in mind not fur from here as he can have in commission."

Foreman Turley opined that it wouldn't hurt to suggest it to him.

"Not it," said Collson. "There'd have to be accounts kep', an' Effie could do that. Her an' Emmy Morris used to do considerable summin' back in Carbonville."

"True enough," the foreman ended as the two men walked away together toward Turley's sister's home. "I don't see anything to stop him and Sis from settling down an' behaving themselves for a spell, instead of being everlastingly on the trot. Running a pit of his own can't be much worse than all the time running from somebody else's. If there's any difference at all, Collson, I think it should be for the better."

But misdirected energy clings tenaciously to its path. Had Wilkes only himself to suit it would have pleased him to continue as he was: a roving emissary in the interest of unionism which in those days frequently failed to unite. However there were too many opposed to his impractical genius. He finally capitulated. His wife and he entered into the contract together, Effie having still a tidy little sum of her own left from overmuch economy during her school-teaching. And it took all her womanly tact and foresight to pull them through those first precarious days, as well as Roger's courage and determination once thoroughly embarked on the new line.

From their first venture in larger fields we have accompanied them in this story, and to that point now attained we may turn our attention once more with the truthful assertion that such success as had eventually come was due far more to Roger Wilkes's careful choice of aides than perfection in generalship. The keystone that kept his arch intact has done the same for many a mining man. He understood men better than mines.

Now after many years the time was come for him to lay the burden on young shoulders better prepared to carry it, and "take it easy" for the rest of his days. The family settled itself into a state of complacency long denied it, and almost deluded themselves it was permanent. The fickle jade of fortune had opportunely paved the way to rest by removing one incubus, and here, almost before the last echoes of that died stepped up with another!

But while peace did as yet remain, what with the stimulus of newer things, newer arrangements, they of that household permeated with the sweet incense of love, took quiet pleasure in reviewing the arduous and sometimes humorous as well as tragic phases of the journey as they had found it.

Elizabeth, recently home, remarked the burdens plac-

ed on her sex in the mining districts of Europe. She had seen women in Belgium, Germany, even in Great Britain, working like men around the mines, a condition of affairs so happily missing from our own land. This was one of the themes born of the long tour which for her would never cease to interest. The semi-pessimistic Effie couldn't see such an abyss in comparison.

"They're not the only 'women of the mines' who know vicissitude, dear child," she said, turning her keen eyes in the direction of the morris-chair and Roger. "They do generally have an obtuse husband and a settled habitation. Why," she added with an acrid thrust that was lost on the man in the chair, "old Jimmy Wilmot's joke would have died there long ago from ennui."

Mrs. Wilkes had been to the kitchen for some fresh water to replace the stale fluid feeding a bunch of American Beauties, whose petals vied for supremacy with the exquisite colors of a vase Elizabeth had brought among a trunkful of other things, for June was come once more to Carbonia.

"Well, Effie," Wilkes gave in at the start, too sleepy to argue the point, "we were sure of matters not getting monotonous with us as they threaten to do now since we got over that bad affair in West Virginia. If I remember right they got pretty lively sometimes," his face wreathed in reminiscence of scenes conjured. The brain of the man seemed to have grown dull to the pain of past impressions, or was it the woman in the case who had borne it all?

Let us see.

As this family of mining folk sat in that room it looked the very impersonification of Content. Out the window bees hummed on the flowers swinging lazily in the June wind, on occasion wafting sedative fragrance through the casement. The little woman turned to her husband with the cutting remark:

"They were too lively for the agitator's wife, Roger Wilkes—too strenuous for the woman and child . . . I have but to close my eyes, Elizabeth, dear, to see you clinging again to my skirts while I cried and packed and cried, first over this broken thing and then over that, while old Wilmot and a few of his kind grinned at the door without offering to help. My better neighbors and I rarely got acquainted; we never stayed in one place long enough."

"Jimmy Wilmot?" echoed the man in the chair, too comfortably sleepy to get mad. "It was him that told you three moves was as good as a fire, wasn't it, Effie?" Roger lapsed into mine-town "English."

"Yes, and it was I who told him that was the ninth in a few years! Also that my heart was grown bitter toward the Chairman of The Pit-Committee although I loved him," the aging face wreathed and the eyes lighted with the recollection, "at least when he stayed with me long enough . . ."

The graying head bent to hide the color in its wrinkling cheeks, and the fair replica of its younger love looked affectionately at her mother and the man in the chair, then lovingly waved her hand to the love of her heart evincing more or less agitation as he walked up and down the stone path in the garden of flowers.

For the second and the last time Eldred Morris was a boarder at Wilkes's. While Elizabeth was away he had moved bag and baggage. Matters had gone from bad to worse between John Morris and his son—both equally stubborn—both right, absolutely so, each according to his own idea. Their viewpoints had no common meeting ground in Carbonia.

And Eldred Morris was this Sabbath day wrestling with the first grave ethical problem of his managerial career. He returned, but without a smile, the salutation of Elizabeth, and suddenly strode toward the gate where

a man called to him. And while manager and miner conversed the two women in that home looked out of the same window but did not see the same views. One looked into The Future; the other into The Past.

Among the sun-kissed hills beyond Colville one saw no clouded happiness, nothing but one long dream of love, children, and marital joy, soon, now, very soon, to be consummated. To the other the trees held tangible things, even as their long roots gripped real earth covering coal-beds which turned to tiny streams of real gold for them.

But unlike Elizabeth, Effie Wilkes saw, also, alloy in a dark line whose angles were tortuous. In it were buried for safe-keeping and traveling, slightly beneath a layer of fine coal, a miner's tools, with every one of which she was as a woman unduly familiar. She saw among those trees a tiny cottage, the walls of which, and the floor, were over-neat and bright compared with her surroundings. And that square piano—her piano!! How its possession had seared her! Loath to part with it, and yet the burden of constant moving . . .

Then her eyes lighted again over those evenings it had cheered her in each strange village, and brought to a respectful distance of her door the younger mining boys, open-mouthed and rapt, to shamble off unsatisfied when the last note died. Her square piano! The only one in many a village she had known. It filled the room almost, even as it was now the most cherished article among many of more intrinsic worth. And as she looked out into the distance her nostrils were enveloped again with breezes strongly freighted with sulphuric fumes and the quaint odor of mignonette, which she grew in boxes, and would no more think of leaving to the tender or brutal hands of the village youth than she would her piano.

To Effie Wilkes on this beautiful Sabbath the mem-

ory of it all was not altogether sad. In a certain sense she felt that in some respects there was in it—from that distance—more joy than sorrow, as there always is when the vale of Youth is viewed from the precipice of Age. The cute, pinafored, child seemed somehow still more dear to her than that same child now sitting beside her in the full bloom of young womanhood; the little gingham dresses, the auburn curls so tenderly fostered, more satisfying to the mother-soul than the grown beauty of that same form enhanced with the best creations of Parisian clothing art from the sole of her shoe to the jewelled combs glittering in the wealth of neatly-coiffured hair.

Mrs. Wilkes rose and stood watching with eager curiosity the two men at the gate, and sighed. As for the man in the chair any possible regrets he had been indulging in were obviously mere persiflage. He was asleep. His daughter laid aside a book which had lain long unread on her lap.

Effie Wilkes went to her kitchen, thence out to the flower garden in the rear. Here she was joined later by Roger, who shook off lethargy by accompanying his wife on a visit to Emily Morris's, while in the house Eldred Morris spoke somewhat dis-spiritedly to a sympathetic and loving listener of his first great conflict of opinion with his men. Later, at his suggestion, they went out.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE POINT OF VIEW

When Eldred and Elizabeth returned from a short walk toward the mine Elizabeth, seeing him in a better spirit, forgot the matter intentionally. The cargo of industry weighs lightly sometimes on the scales of woman's love. She told him rather of the ludicrous phase of her mother's reminiscence which he had missed, and of another story she had told her one day of the same Wilmot, when the ninth move had been several times augmented and they were packing again in the same village, her orating husband having been discharged from the newest mine of several thereabouts—of chickens (which Roger loved as his wife her piano) which were so much in sympathy with their owner's proclivity for changing residences that the hens, according to said Wilmot, would, on the approach of a wagon down the road, turn onto their backs expecting the string to be tied to their legs!

"I had heard the story before and so had old Wilmot and I told mother it was old, and so forth, and what do you think she said, Eldred?" the blue eyes sparkled with merriment. She had pulled him to her knees and put her arm around his waist as far as it would go, and, finding it not quite sufficient to encompass the strong body, had helped it out with the other. Both of the lovers were apt to get precipitately weak, in those days, and thus need the support of each other.

"How should I know, Elizabeth?" he asked, smiling into her eyes.

"She said as drolly as could be that it had indeed the better of the chickens in that respect . . . Our cupboard never remained full long enough for them to mature."

In the laughter which followed Morris told her: "You got just what you deserved," and she as frankly admitted that she, too, felt that way about it. Then in a more serious mood he asked her questions on the matter troubling him.

"What would you do if—if I were to cause you quite as much misery, perhaps, in another form? If the 30th were here and we were married, as I hope nothing prevent us this time, and I, like your father, let us say," he urged, seeing her hesitate in wonder.

"How could you be?" she failed at the moment to gather his meaning. "You're different; you—no one will blacklist you as they did papa, dear. Why do you say that?"

"Different—in some ways, Elizabeth. But the employer with a set point of view can stir up trouble if he persist in adhering to it, don't you think?"

Her head bent, and her eyes set on his large, brown hands, the fingers of which were clasped close to her full bosom.

"I hadn't thought of it in that way," she replied. "But—but I don't think I should cry as mother did. And if I did," came more firmly, "I would want *my* husband to be a man—just as my sweetheart is—and not a jelly-fish to turn away from a principle because it might hurt to fight for it," turning her head in an assumed attempt to escape the reward. Then, having regained her composure and her color Elizabeth added a little of her mother's often repeated logic anent employing-fishes without fins and the ultimate predicament they found themselves in when trying to stem the industrial current. "I would rather 'gypsy' with the one than stay in one place with the other."

"And cry as mother did?"

"I'd pack but never cry, because," Elizabeth replied, "you see I'm Roger Wilkes's daughter."

"Exactly," Morris responded, taking her hand in his and both moving toward one of the windows facing *The Effie*, "but you are also a woman, and you might. But that aside: you see that?" pointing to the smoke rolling from the stacks beside the mine.

Elizabeth nodded, wondering.

"Lots of it, isn't there?" and again she nodded, still wondering.

"You know why it takes all that to overcome a natural tendency water has to run down hill," he explained in part, "carbonic acid gas to seek dip headings and marsh gas high ones? You understand all that, being Roger Wilkes's daughter and a woman of the mines, we'll say," at which she flushed rosily with pride. "You understand what it means if at every one of our mines the auxiliaries that go with that be denied, and yet you still say 'pack?'"

"Eldred," the young woman exclaimed, "you speak in riddles, dear."

He took her gently with him to a divan and looked deep into those wells of innocence which had flowed no tears of anguish and industrial misery as yet.

"Aren't the mines yours, dear boy, at least to control?"

"In a sense, yes; but you see even the autocrat has but two hands while those places driving toward Colville and other places need many. What is to take their places—peaceably—if they cease?" he asked her, still alluding to the subject indirectly. But from the heavy, ominous silence which settled like a pall over the woman's features it was evident Elizabeth Wilkes sensed the portent of the coming storm. She told him he was unusually strange, and doubtless overwrought regarding the possibilities, while she looked closely in an effort to

read that in his eyes which his tongue refused to speak.

"Let us forget it, then;" he suggested. "Come and play for me and let us sing something," said he, "it will help pass the afternoon away." He snapped his watch shut as they entered the room in which a beautiful new piano stood. On it a book lay open, and Elizabeth aimlessly turned the pages.

"I'll find one," he said, taking the book and pointing as he put it back to "Some Day We'll Understand."

So together maid and man sang the beautiful hymn of promise. It struck a responsive chord in each young heart that day, and without shame the man's voice vibrated and the woman's eyes were moist before the end. But yesterday their way to complete happiness seemed clear at last . . . and now?

Since the control had passed into the mining engineer's hands his every move and decision had been made after long and earnest consideration, with always the fullest possible toleration toward the men and their opinions. His family were miners pure and simple. He never forgot that; he had no desire to forget it. The woman he loved as he loved his own soul was a miner's daughter: a miner but yesterday seeing all things from the employee's point of view, and even now finding it often against his inherent nature to go against them.

Between the two the reasonable course had as often as not been changed to suit the men's ideas. The old superintendent shook his now whitened head, and spoke of the smash sure to come to the wheel started down a mountain side. He knew the strength of many men combined, also how well they liked Eldred Morris and he them. But, he said, in words having the same meaning if differently expressed: the normal prairie-grass that feeds the herd, aflame destroys it.

While murmurings had long been heard the crisis in a peremptory demand for "Union Recognition" at all

their mines, and union rules in every respect, with his father's name as chairman of the committee delegated to present it, had literally swept the mine manager from his feet. Capitulation meant making void many rules and regulations Morris had fostered proudly. When the committee came, his father and Collson part of it, he had been unprepared to give definite answer. Others were to be consulted. He had done this and sent word for the men to appoint one man to call at the big house that day regardless of its being Sunday, that if the men reconsidered their decision the mine might continue its long unbroken run. He asked as a favor to himself that the "one" be not his father. This man Effie Wilkes had referred to some time before as "the agitator," wondering if he had a wife.

And when he was gone from him, Morris long and earnestly pondered the fact that all his efforts had failed to keep clear the road he seemed, till then, to be traveling to a wife and the last dimension of happiness. This road he had taken the most diplomatic pains to keep clear of every tangible object, only to suddenly be confronted near the end with that non-negotiable mountain against which men and nations alike have stood baffled and defeated: The human point of view and men's willingness to suffer and die for a principle. The way he had thought clear was blocked with men—determined men—and many. His mind was to become—if they carried their point—subservient in many phases of mine control to theirs.

Until this was settled there could be no great joy for him and—her. Marriage, anticipated in a few weeks, and the proposed trip to the Adirondacks, would be impossible with that encompassing uncertainty. He must be mind-free: a word would make him so, for the company had placed the matter up to him.

"A penny for those thoughts," the blue eyes twinkled

up at him, and the crimson cheeks dimpled with a smile.

“They stand the chance of costing millions of coppers and untold—” He had almost said “misery for more than one,” but instead sighed as he leaned heavily on the mahogany.

“Then, let us chase them away again,” she prompted light-heartedly, striking the first notes of “Lead Thou Me On.”

“Will that be appropriate for such obvious indecision?” Elizabeth’s lips framed the words which lighted her “secret”—purposeful incognizance—as so many lamps a dark place. And seeing she had uptripped she colored deeply, while the man bit his lip and turned the leaves to find her favorite.

He found it and they sang it tenderly, reverently, well. Both had splendid voices at that time. But even the most fervent singing tires. Morris took out his watch and snapping it shut said:

“Only three—the day seems long; I thought it five or six. What next?”

Elizabeth suggested a drive past Morris’s, past Collson’s and The Four Rows, up over the hill where Pietrecco and his companions slept, and thence home for supper. He differed without scruple and was obstinate.

“Anywhere but near dad’s, today,” he said, and she saw a hardness come into his face and eyes that had not been there before. She had never remarked it but once: when he spoke of Rummel—that Rummel who through drink had evidently found the little port lying snugly waiting for each human barque at the edge of life’s sea, and, let us hope, the girl and babe who had gone before him. At least so had the news come from Colville to Carbonia that he had chosen to go in search of it, and none being desirous of contradicting there the matter rested.

CHAPTER XXV.

A SURFACE TRAGEDY

Act One: The Clouds Gather

Elizabeth went to her room to dress; the young man toward the stables. As he turned he caught a glimpse of her through the open window, and a thrill of cruel emotion went through him. The question insisted: How far should a man go for the woman he loves, particularly when that man and woman are on the eve of happiness which, granting the affection pure, original, has no equal in intensity in all the range of human emotion?

“It’s up to you, Morris!” they had said, and he knew it by the cruel pain it was inflicting: the cruelest his soul had ever been called on to bear. If he sent the word that he had changed his mind to the men’s headquarters, even to his father’s home across the fields—the word that stood between him and the great joy—would it be conducive of the best results for him and for her? Would permanent happiness come of it? or regret? The exquisite days would fade to commonplace, but what of the subjugation that would follow weakness—now. That might remain for life!

“This is hard luck,” he murmured, stooping to pluck a bunch of flowers for Elizabeth. “Dad’s troubles all came after—mine before marriage. And yet I’ve done what’s right man to man and never shirked—not even today. To do that would be right according to their idea and utterly wrong according to mine, and against my own idea of what constitutes any man’s inalienable

privilege. The two propositions seem irreconcilable: one or the other must give way, and I would not—neither would she desire me to—debase my manhood by acting the hypocrite. 'Be a man,' she said, and isn't that I am trying to uphold—the principle of my firm belief—the greater part of me? of any man? I'd die rather than she should suffer, but this . . . I've given in . . . wages, hours, identical with the union mines, not a material iota which will take from those homes in the village a loaf of bread or an hour of comfort. I've spent more money in the last year on their homes than Wilkes did in all the years before and yet—we stick on this.

Morris's steps brought him near the house. Elizabeth tapped the window but he paid no heed. Perhaps he heard; perhaps he didn't. He had turned stablewards again.

Micky had the horses and carriage about ready, for he lived in three snug rooms above the stable with the latest adoration. His first, large love lay near the beloved Cross. And Love seeks proximity of its desired in maid as in mistress; in hostler as well as master.

Gawan's problems were simpler of decision than were those of the man who, as he again neared the house, raised his head and saw the vision of winsome womanhood near the window. Once again he turned abruptly and went in the garden. Nor could he have told just then which of two burning desires would prevail. As he walked he heard no sound of the mine below, rather the voices of jeering men, contempt of victors and those who like himself still believed in "an open shop." His eyes saw no flowers, but rather demand stepping inevitably on demand and overwhelming the adamantine of his convictions, transforming him to a mere figure-head insofar as concerned the control of his own mines.

"They'll see I'm in earnest and continue working," he

compromised with himself. "It's only an ethical consideration, and the principle involved cannot mean to them what it does to me."

Yet in rebuttal came immediately and vivid the picture of a man, young as himself, equally determined, and moving his kind by sheer force of belief in the righteousness of the other side: willing to suffer almost unto death for that which to his own son seemed wrong. Thus to the actuality of acute physical suffering and mental pain did The Invisible lead the mere mortal, obviously predetermined on no denial in similar premise at a later day.

"Certainly," the newer prisoner writhed at the first twist of the shackle binding him, "in view of the facts my contempt for him and his kind is a farce . . . in his place I would have done the same to Her . . ."

Involuntarily Morris clenched his fists. But an hour ago he had seen no right on the other side. He had sent the man away with a concrete summary of his employer's opinions on Constitutional Rights as they touched this case. He was dealing for a few: the stranger represented two thousand, and it had been thrust upon Morris as it had been thrust upon the men.

He had wavered; so would the men, no doubt. While others were affected one could not think only of oneself alone. When the caroling birds outside Elizabeth's window sang of happiness and the anticipation of their young, and the warm morning sun illumed her room, Eldred Morris had wickedly peeped through the partly open door and solved his first great problem with that look. For a brief period he found his position the opposite to that he had taken in the end, bolstered with love and desire, but it passed. The Invisible, which has ever drawn men and the sons of men farther and still farther from a protoplasmic past to a higher plane of decision, a nearer godship, mercilessly bent the human's

thoughts of softer things, and in the darker waters of more practical affairs had obliterated them.

There remained but two ways now: force or complete capitulation. In perhaps five hundred of those men there existed an elemental desire strong as his own. Their strength imposed their opinions on the rest. Whichever way they took the other fifteen hundred would follow, meekly and reluctantly to work, jubilantly on a strike and into trouble or victory. To them their right to choose who should or should not work at their respective mines was as plain as to deny it was to Eldred Morris. Even moreso as a matter of fact, for with them no doubt existed, while with the young manager it did.

Despite the fact that he had recently sent the stranger away with an adverse decision an imaginary placing of himself in the men's position: in the attitude which urged John Morris and Roger Wilkes to accept misery and an empty cupboard, brought doubt. But there must be a dominant factor in all human affairs and in each nature risen above the mere animal status of mentality. After twenty years the struggle was on again, on the other side of the fence as Turley or Collson had so aptly put it.

"I wondered, often," Morris cried almost in anguish, "if in their places I would have crushed Her heart; but it was then. I have ceased to wonder or question," he told the Ever-Luring within himself who, firm as The Sphinx and more of a riddle, but smiled at this floundering Atom, despite the fact that from its eyes, acutely sensitive, from its mind, acutely imaginative as all such natures are who create ideals, this human atom glanced at Another and say therein tears and, perhaps, blood.

Turning from her he went back into the yard where the stables were. Elizabeth called to him but he did not answer. He was still not quite conquered, but searching in the deeper recesses of his mind for a side-step from

this Siren. He could find none. The struggle which had come on him in all its intensity in the last hour seemed but to bind him with bonds made of the warp and woof of generations: some material impregnated within his every fibre in increasing quantity from remotest time. He turned again to the house, sweating inordinately. The Vision of Winsome Womanhood was coming toward him in all its loveliness of pink and white.

Morris glanced at Elizabeth and thought himself shame-faced. She saw no shame. He heard her reprobining him in sweet terms which carried no rebuke, but his head was bowed and his hands deep in his pockets as on a cold day. As became a mole who had wrestled with a mountain and won—almost—he sighed heavily, relieved that the worst was over. He was battered and worn with the brief but severe mental struggle.

“Eldred!” she cried almost fearfully, for the Western sun fell full upon his countenance, “what is the matter? You are pale, dear.”

“I am hot through cowardice,” he replied hoarsely, thrusting his hand burning and feverish into hers soft and cool, “and, my God, I can’t help it!”

Then turning from her suddenly, without noticing the look of extreme alarm his actions had brought into the blue eyes, he pulled a note-book from his pocket. Pencil there was fastened to it, and he wrote feverishly as one does who, if he do not haste, will not write at all. Tearing the leaf from its company he held it aloft to Gawan at the stable-door, and Gawan came.

“Take this to the superintendent—Turley, I mean—at once. I’ll attend the horses if you’re not back when we return.” And Gawan, between whom and Eldred Morris there had come a great gulf which neither had any desire to bridge, said “Yes, sir,” and was gone.

While the beaten fighter explained to Elizabeth as they

rattled over the road beyond Calabrué's, the stableman rode horseback in the other direction toward the gray-haired Turley's, who, like Gawan, was Eldred's servant, now, and must do his bidding.

That night Colville Western Union sent a message to a "Protective Agency" for a number of deputies "to come prepared for any emergency," it read.

* * * * *

As became men hired to preserve the peace of a great commonwealth these derelicts of the city's slums and whisky-dens, these gun-men of the tenderloins, came to Carbonia, openly as such import deserved. The red sun sinking slowly over the spires of Colville fell aslant the blued barrels of their guns and made a deeper color—almost to the onlooker a blood-red—of the dark walnut joined to the steel.

Our village, as such untutored hamlets will during periods of general hysteria, resolved itself into a committee of unwelcome. It carried for the purpose of appropriately serenading the newcomers such an assortment of discarded cans and wash-boilers, broom-sticks and old kettles, as has never been seen along that highway since. Yet it seemed a great hub-bub had been caused without need. The tempest in a teapot gasped itself out for want of fuel, and the lethargy grew painful to the gentlemen who daily and nightly prayed to their Plutonian god for "somethin' to turn up."

As day followed day with no sign of hostilities it is safe to assume more than one trigger-finger itching, since Morris had ordered that they cease shooting at inanimate marks, which tender and harmless diversion had enlivened the echoing woods and sent shivers of fearful anticipation down the Carbonian feminine spine.

And so prevailed quiet. But the company's mines were idle, and what use is a principle dead? The contract with a great steel corporation was vanishing, and

Eldred Morris sought at first to hold it by purchasing coal as Wilkes had done when it was a lesser matter by far. With many other incidentals Wilkes had not to contend with this plan proved too costly, among the "incidentals" being not the least an official force at each idle mine and each man on salary, not counting the up-keep of the "peace preservers."

This would never do, seemed suddenly to have become the opinion of those in power. If Carbonia's men wouldn't work others would, perhaps. The fiat went forth, and, bruited among The Four Rows and its contemporaries of the surrounding country, set a smoldering fire aflame. The lightning struck almost out of a clear sky.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SURFACE TRAGEDY

Act Two: The Clouds Break

Elizabeth was not unaware of her lover's moves with a view to starting the large mine nearby first. A little mouse had whispered that the crisis with the men was expected at any hour. The miners were determined the imported strike-breakers should not enter the mine when they came; Morris was equally determined they should. *The Effie* was going to start—with the old men if they would, without them otherwise.

Relative to this a meeting had been held late in the night, or early in the morning, if you please, in Bilkin's Hall, whether you please or no, at which—and here we transcribe only the veracious account of certain "spies" of the opposing force—men had been seen loading and demonstrating weapons. Vari-colored rabbit-gun shells had been freely in evidence, and younger bloods carefully burnished the nickle on their "bull dogs," the latter glistening ominously beneath kerosene lamps affixed by one Bilkins to illumine less murderous things.

On the night of that meeting Elizabeth did not sleep at all. Sometime toward morning she found herself in that peculiar state when one is neither sleeping nor waking, and had felt—so she dreamed, perhaps—the touch of a tender hand on her hair and someone's lips touch her own. Then footsteps had hurried quietly out of the room. From then on her sleep had been more sound and remained so until the morning was advanced.

The veranda of the Wilkes home was an agreeable spot

on a sunny morning, particularly after the chillness of the bath. Elizabeth nearly always sat there in Summer after this now habitual function. She sat there this morning of mornings for her—and him. A few minutes after she was seated her mother came out through the hallway dividing the house, and stood silently for a moment with one hand resting on the pillar supporting the porch at that point and with the other shading her eyes. She turned and saw Elizabeth and bade her good morning.

Below them the morning mists still covered *The Effie* and its buildings from view. At length Elizabeth asked regarding Morris. Had he been in since dawn? and what time had her father gone to the county-seat to see the sheriff. Mrs. Wilkes replied with a sentence:

"Eldred hasn't been in since before daylight, and I do wish your father hadn't gone to 'Little' Washington about that injunction"

The elder woman had sometime during the last half hour heard shots, then more shots, and following that a strange, long silence. Also she had, on going nearer the lane leading to the mine heard other things still more ominous. But regarding this latter she couldn't be sure she had heard the correct words shouted, and she would not have told all she knew if she had. It was obvious, however, she was extremely agitated.

She went into the kitchen and came out with a cup of cocoa for the younger woman. It was a positive pleasure in that household to indulge the bride-to-be, each little service intensifying the love they all bore her. She placed the cup and saucer near Elizabeth, then looked deep into her eyes with an interrogation a moment later she spoke outright.

"Will you promise me one thing, dear," she said. "Will you do something—something very necessary for your—for—."

Mrs. Wilkes stopped, undecided how to frame her words, while her daughter said, looking at her wonderingly between the loose tresses which vied for color-supremacy with the mist-clouded sun: "Why, of course, mamma. Why——."

Her mother interposed suddenly, turning to go whence she had come.

"If I should send you word do it quickly for—for your own sake, dear child," she ended very abruptly and enigmatically. Then she slipped into the hall and out the rear door, perhaps to avoid further questioning which, just then, she did not care to answer, nor had no authentic means of answering if she would. She went in search of it, and, finding it, forgot the lesser fear in face of the greater.

The train of thought prompted in Elizabeth Wilkes's mind by her mother's words, and still more because of her unusual agitation, excited the young woman to the point of intense uneasiness. She called after her to question her further, to explain, but she was gone. Her place was taken by Sophy, the maid, who promptly blurted out what the more cautious woman had intended only as a last word, and from Elizabeth:

"Why should I go so quickly to Mrs. Morris's? What did mamma want me to do, did she say?" Then: "Poor mamma, she is so excited this morning, I wonder——."

Under the eager, impulsive, questioning even the bovine countenance colored: the obtuse mind saw its fault. But having one foot in the two were not worse. Sophy even exaggerated.

Elizabeth went back to the veranda, but her fingers were so cold she could not feel the cup. She set it down untouched, and for the second time untied then tied her hair in a loose knot. She peered anxiously along the dusty road running to the big mine. Its end, so far as she could see its end, contained no living thing. It lay

yellow, warm and peaceful in the morning sun. False deductions often reassure. This did. But anxiety still remained to urge action. She grasped her slippers with trembling fingers, and spoke aloud her agony as the sound of much shouting reached her:

“If anything happens, oh, God, take care of Eldred!!”

She thrust her feet into accustomed places but never had laces seemed more stubborn. But at least they gave her time to soliloquize: to dissect her mother’s ominous suggestion and to bring her sweetheart’s words—which he had not known her listening to—into greater clarity. She had heard him speak more tenderly than usual of his father and Tom and Collson, of other men whom he had liked almost as brothers and had worked beside as a boy, and wrestled with in the tumultuous joy of welling strength, even as today he was again covering the ground morally in a test of power: “Good fellows, peaceable generally, and yet perhaps going to die—for that . . .”

Elizabeth Wilkes seemed to have only just then realized the appalling possibility of it all. Hitherto it had the vagueness of a dream. She started suddenly as if a crowd of thugs and bounders had by some magic appeared before her, and with their deadly Winchesters were about to shoot. “I must stop them!” she cried, but only the soft wind caught her words as the impossible assertion died with a throb in her throat, and the imaginary drama she had pictured herself as part of faded as a living thing came up the yellow streak of road. Her form stiffened and her fingers set tightly in her hands-palms as she watched it emerge from the mist and take to itself a specific shape with bare feet rythmically pattering. Coming opposite Bobbie Burns MacDonald gasped an answer to her question:

“The dep’ties has shot a lot of men,” he shouted not ungladly, doubtless feeling a small measure of impor-

tance in his still smaller breast, as became the vehicle of such momentous news. Then having fulfilled his purpose there the lad went on, his dotted blouse bobbing oddly up and down as he loped swiftly along the path into the swail and up the opposite hill to Morris's, thence downward past Enoch Collson's and to the mining village.

CHAPTER XXVII. A SURFACE TRAGEDY

Act Three: The Price of Liberty

Carbonia was expecting something to turn up. A quiet gathering of its forces followed the midnight meeting in Bilkin's Hall, accompanied by much whispering haste, with a feeling of impending dread uppermost only in the minds of the aged and the women. For the strong males of the village there existed rather a complacent expectancy; for the irresponsible youth an exultant joy such as their hearts had never throbbed to.

The quiet of the settlement was broken first by the union propaganda of John Morris, et al. The second time Fate and a pair of swift legs coupled to a slender body decided Bobbie Burns as the medium which should transform phlegmatic housewives and decrepit males into hypersensitive beings running wildly from house to house. And leaving them thus spreading the news we turn back to the tumultuous scenes being enacted elsewhere, into which Elizabeth Wilkes was swept as a leaf into a maelstrom.

Elizabeth's first thought was to find her mother. Evidently she believed the latter knew more regarding Eldred than she had told. In carrying out this idea she followed the same way and entered the garden from the kitchen door. So far as she could see it was empty. A horse neighed in the stables: a splendid animal Wilkes had given his daughter on a recent birthday, and which lover and maid shared in common. The groom and his helper were gone. She came out of the harness-room and called her mother's name.

No one answered, but almost as if replying to her a man's form dropped from the fence running around the garden at the upper end, a high, closely-built affair made thus to keep the village youth from too freely helping itself from a number of fruit trees and berry bushes growing at the farther edges. In that direction the lane running to *The Effie* from the highway was nearer.

The man came directly toward her, gasping as he ran. His cheeks bore a pallor even deeper than the universal pallor of The Underground. Elizabeth recognized in him one of the big mine's official force, and, behind him, enveloped in a certain antique cloak of martial design, an old peace officer struggled several hundred yards beyond the wall. Seeing the trend of affairs Collson had at the last moment thrown in his lot on the side of law and order.

The spirit of it all had to a great extent overcome the tremulousness natural to one of his age in such circumstances. He felt bolder than he looked, and, as evidencing that feeling, had contemptuously cast aside the proffered rifle and substituted therefore the old sawed-off musket which had upheld the dignity of a different Union at Cold Harbor and Gettysburg. It was up to date in that it bore the huge tunnel of steel common to shot guns, retaining sign of anything ancient only in loading. This was accomplished in Collson's "rifle" from the wicked end.

As for the old lampman he would certainly have scorned the veracious imputation that its powder chamber contained nothing stronger than dank air this day of days! A bright new percussion cap decorated its workings, and the hammer stood at that angle by Collson's placing when men take care where points the muzzle.

Thus did he run, sometimes. Had the life of every

inhabitant of The Four Rows depended on a continuation of certain fleet-footed spurts the old miner were compelled to cease his efforts and see the sacrifice. Collson's heart was willing; his courage was equal to any emergency, as witness his contempt of the Winchester in this premise, but his breath!

And there we have told you the secret of Collson's degradation: the miner's standard floating at half-mast above a lamp office. For thus when we do not kill our men with strata or with gas or coal-dust we serve the same purpose by "miner's asthma."

The old man had watched the younger stop MacDonald's Bobbie, speak to him, then start another way. He had followed slowly. The fireboss, seeing Elizabeth, stopped. She went nearer; he tried to move away, a sentence broken by the looks of the young woman's face. But she would have no denial. MacDonald stood breathless, near.

"Tell me, for God's sake, Mr. MacDonald, is *he* among them?" she pleaded, clutching the rougher arm of the man whose eyes flinched in kindness toward the frailer being. For a brief moment his tongue was undecided; the next, not being clever in periphrasing, he had told far more than he had intended. The effect made him alarmed for the woman, and he offered his help. Elizabeth refused it and consolation. He went on where he was needed, and she, because she had not the strength to do otherwise, stood with waxen face near the stable-wall. Once or twice MacDonald turned to look at her, then, with obvious reluctance, he was lost among the crowd gathering about the premises.

* * * * *

Whether Elizabeth fainted or not she never knew. Sentences reached her disjointedly. She heard someone say: "There's three dead an' Morris—" Then immediately from another in louder voice which drowned

the first: "Move out there fellers, an' let the doctor in, won't yer?" and what she took for her mother speaking harshly but not distinct. The reply reached her plainly enough:

"No, ma'm: it was yer damned deperties!" and from another, or it might have been the same for all Elizabeth knew: "He was tryin' to get us miners to go back an' got hit in the back hisself . . ."

Following this there came nothing from that end of the lot but the co-mingling of voices: the roar of a small mob following in the wake of men carrying a stretcher. It seemed an eternity from the time Elizabeth saw them carry it through the gate until she felt strong enough to follow, and in the meantime other things had transpired closer at hand of which she had been a silent and vaguely-conscious witness.

Indistinctly she saw another man come over the fence as MacDonald had done, after making much noise on the opposite side. And whether from excitement or not she did not know, but he had tumbled from the top to the ground. Also he must have been one of the "peace preservers," for he had in his hands a gun when he fell, at least it looked like a gun when he came nearer, for there glittered plainly above a certain part of it one of those bright copper caps which set such things off.

Elizabeth had indistinctly crouched nearer the wall when the awful-looking weapon fell from the man's hands and struck the ground, expecting the explosion she always feared. And having picked it up the old man—for such he was—came down the garden scowling at the universe. He looked like a soldier and gazed her way, but thinking perhaps she had of her own volition chosen the spot to vent her sorrow went on. She heard what she took for his voice pleading from the front steps—those same steps up which Elizabeth had so proudly carried Esther's baby—heard it rise strongly

above the noise in telling them to keep their cursing and their noise for a more appropriate place.

"There's a young woman, yander, byes, as ain't well just now, an' the best master as youn ever have is shot up-stairs . . . Be off! be off!! an' leave 'em in peace, aye, an' you, too, yer skunk-huntin' ragskallamuffin, an' take care of Nellie as you should be doin' . . ."

Evidently the mob was put partly human. The hound remained, his long ears hanging dolefully, his big eyes set on the house door. The men left to mingle later with a larger mob forming near the mine.

* * * * *

In face of a greater trouble Elizabeth Wilkes was left to her own effort to come out of her "faint." For the first time in her life she had been utterly ignored. Collson and MacDonald were with the doctor in Eldred Morris's room when she found her way to it. She had first found tears beside the stable-wall and strength followed. Why? How should I know, being a man and ignorant of such occult physiognomics as differentiate the sexes. Ask your physician, Madam, if he be well learned in such matters, why Elizabeth gained strength when she started to cry real heartily, and why the doctor's ears were the keener in hearing her come sobbing along the corridor. Hilman, gently soothing, pleading, prevailed on her to return downstairs.

She did, and entered the room where she and the wounded man had spent part of the Sunday afternoon. Just as they had left it the hymnal stood on the piano. Monday's washing had caused Sophy to give that part of the house a rest. Near the instrument was a "Class Photograph" of the mining engineer taken on the day of his graduation, and the duplicate of one at Emily Morris's and an equally fine one at Collson's Batch.

For an appreciable length of time Elizabeth stood beneath this picture, hands clasped in each other and the

two directly in front of her breast. Spots on the fine linen covering her were wet with constant augmentation, but her lips made no audible sound. Then, turning from his image, smiling down upon her in all its ruddy completeness, she spoke aloud as to a present auditor:

"Oh, God, *don't* let him die!" Then: "I know now what he meant when he said 'Liberty will always exact an equitable sacrifice.'"

Elizabeth turned from the wall to the instrument. She sank to the stool and reviewed the scene of the preceding afternoon with a poignancy which man may not describe to do her grief justice. The notes of the music they had sung together arose with her prayer uttered in questioning of Fate and herself:

"Oh, if he die?" and in self-incrimination of a passivity she now deplored: "What will it all mean, this 'being a man and upholding principle,' this victory and honor, continued work, what good will it all mean if he die?" and mocking her gloomy thought the black type stared its answer:

"* * * Amid the encircling gloom
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on.
Keep Thou my feet! I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me."

In effect the beautiful words were magical. Almost Elizabeth felt mistress of her actions, and with it came a desire overwhelming all else. She must see him. The surgeon had been witness to no transformation. He refused to let her in. And for some time Elizabeth was equally persistent in remaining near.

Effie Wilkes slipped quickly through the door and told her why she must not enter the room just then,

and why it were better she returned downstairs. This accomplished the older woman again sought her place beside the window in the room she had left, from which the great mine and all its environs were now plainly visible—and many men.

Passing the front door onto the veranda Elizabeth also saw without alarm the growing crowds near the mine. The mists were risen; the "protectors" vanished. Strife increased to such extent that sounds and imprecations reached the woman shading her eyes with her hands, as well as the woman in the room above.

Just then Elizabeth felt glad she had not looked on her lover. Her mother had told her a little; more she had heard surreptitiously, and a human body, loved as she loved his, stripped naked and blood-covered from the waist down is not a pretty sight.

In an out-of-the-way corner in the room in which the wounded man lay Collson and MacDonald twirled their caps in agitation. From a bath-room adjoining Mrs. Wilkes procured all Hilman called for, including warm water. The company-surgeon was working unaided except for an occasional bending of the two men to hand him some article or other. Out of sheer modesty, first, and the fact of the doctor's presence being between her and the body on the bed, second, Effie Wilkes looked out of the window facing the mine. Hilman broke the oppressive silence.

"He'll be conscious soon, I believe."

Then there was quiet again save for the rustle of a skirt or the uneasy shuffling of feet. The woman at the window turned to the men in the room:

"The mine's on fire!" she said, but her voice had no alarm in it, rather the completion of an expectancy.

"Gude God!" cried MacDonald, and jumped to his feet. Collson also rose. MacDonald was whiter than the man on the bed. Hilman put forth his hand quickly.

"Sit down, Mr. MacDonald, sit down," he commanded; "you may be needed for something worse just now." When MacDonald had reluctantly resumed his seat the surgeon asked regarding the men at the mine.

"The scabs?" the Scot bluntly questioned, and immediately apologized to Mrs. Wilkes. She smiled her pardon, and the frank expression brought vividly to her mind the many times she had heard the term of reproach in her earlier home uttered by her husband. To the doctor MacDonald explained conditions at the mine.

"Then they have them 'holed,' as it were?" Hilman enquired, endeavoring, as a doctor will, to minimize the seriousness of the situation by assumed light-heartedness, "and are doing as we used to do when I was a boy with groundhogs; is that it?"

"No," MacDonald replied, "if it all burns tae the ground nae smoke can git tae the men, d'ye no sae?" And, with much pride and profuse detail, he explained how the man on the bed had rearranged the mine so that in event of just such a catastrophe the men would not be smothered by the great holes acting as a crematory flue reversed.

At various points Hilman replied "Exactly," or "I understand," but it was obvious that only his subconscious self was attending to MacDonald. He was concerned with one man whose wrist he held more than the many below the fields beyond *The Effie*. Out of courtesy to Mrs. Wilkes we may assume her quite conversant with this safety-provision of Eldred Morris's construction. Otherwise it is hardly probable a sister of Turley's would have evinced no more alarm than she at the information. For Turley was in the mine, whither he had run with the deputies for safety immediately after the shooting.

A minute later the doctor again bent to his patient. When he arose his almost inscrutable features told as

near as they ever did what he feared. True to his training he tried to speak casually.

"The wires between here and Colville are cut I understand?" He spoke to the men.

MacDonald nodded, and twirled his cap more vigorously. The doctor spoke next to Mrs. Wilkes.

"Have you anybody handy who can ride a horse like —like thunder and lightning?"

"Gawan," she returned laconically, "if he's returned. I'll see."

"Do," said the doctor, handing her a bit of paper on which he had scribbled. "And tell him to get both doctors if he can, and tell either to bring what is on there."

When Elizabeth's (and Eldred's) horse with Gawan a-top was in full gallop toward Colville Mrs. Wilkes returned to the room upstairs.

"Consciousness is farther distant than I thought," Hilmann admitted. Turning to the men he said: "You had better go for Mr. Morris's father and mother and his brother if you can get him. My rig is at your disposal, for Mrs. Morris's use, gentlemen."

Collson spoke for the first time since he came into the room, except in whispers to MacDonald. He spoke acridly:

"Jack Morris is at 'Little' Washington."

The face of the woman still standing at the window turned a deeper pallor than it had when she said the mine was burning. Jack Morris was at the county seat because of action taken by Roger Wilkes and the miner's son.

"But, his mother and brother?"

"Fetch them, at once, if you please," she urged MacDonald, and accompanying him downstairs and into the yard where the doctor's horse and buggy stood. "Leave that there," she commanded. "Take our surrey and coach-horse and I'll get some quilts and blankets."

This done Effie Wilkes went back once more. She feared the meeting with her old schoolmate. But she feared without need. The real mother-heart was full to overflowing of her boy this day: so full it cared not for anything else. It was pitiable to see her when they laid her on chairs by the window, and almost as pathetic the anguish of Elizabeth. She had slipped in with Mrs. Morris and Tom. She cried audibly; the mother did not, but tears streamed down her cheeks and the last atom of color left her face, and her lips almost bled. The scene was too much for MacDonald and Collson. They went out, and the doctor turned to another, this time with a smile lighting his red, fat face.

"Miss Elizabeth," said he, his voice rising with an assumed querulousness, "suppose you help Miss Sophia answer any inquiries at the door? You may tell them, regarding Mr. Morris, that we expect him to be wide awake and enjoying a chat with some of us in a few minutes."

Mrs. Wilkes took her cue from the next words he said, looking aside at Emily Morris:

"This young man, I understand, hasn't seen his mother for some time, and, when he finds she has come purposely to see him he may want to say something he wouldn't care for even his sweetheart to hear, isn't that so, Mrs. Morris?" to which Emily Morris nodded, but the smile the poor soul forced to her lips was uncanny.

For a while after the room was emptied of all save herself, the doctor and her boy—Tom having gone back home for something his mother desired to bring and in her excitement had forgotten—Emily Morris fought the most desperate fight of her life. She wanted to know if her son were going to live. Hilman also knew she did. And she believed he could approximate an answer. Reason urged her to ask: Philosophy ranged itself on the same side, and hinted that knowledge would not

change death to life nor life to death. Against both was Mother-Love, strong in a strength next to God's affection for His children, and as forgiving, yet in the woman weak in face of the possible verdict she believed lay hid in the surgeon's steel-gray eyes. She looked again and again into his face, thence to the form on the bed, and each time baffled. At last she could stand it no longer, her voice firm yet flinching, commanding yet pleading:

"Doctor," she said, "will my Eldred live?"

The physician made no answer for a while. Silence, heavy and ominous, was broken only by the sighs of the mother and the almost imperceptible breathing of the unconscious man. Then soft steps sounded nearby and Mrs. Wilkes entered before the doctor spoke. She sat beside her friend and soothingly asked her if she could do anything for her comfort. Behind her she had closed the door, but another heard the verdict Emily Morris not alone feared.

"I don't know, but," looking closely into the invalid's eyes, and seeing determination there stronger than aught else, "it is very doubtful. He'll be conscious, surely, before long, however, and that's why I sent for you."

The words went like an electric shock through another who had hungered and been unwittingly fed. Elizabeth felt as she had beside the stable-wall, and, fearing in her ignorance that if she fainted and caused any commotion whatsoever there it might have a determining effect on her lover's life, she almost ran downstairs. Mrs. Wilkes, wondering at the sound of steps, investigated. Seeing no one there she went back, and like a Spartan watched the flames lick the last building from the ground near the mine, yet quivered and moved quickly from the window when the panes rattled from the concussion of the exploding powder-house.

And as the fire so the frenzy grew. Men raised their voices and destroyed and cared not why they did it.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DELIRATION

Late that night three physicians, in consultation together, thought Eldred Morris had about an even chance between life and death. "The crisis will come when Ambridge operates," Hilman told John Morris. "You may tell your wife we have sent for him and a nurse, and that he is the most skilled surgeon we know of. We must do the best we can until then, and the women here have promised to help. After that—well—we'll hope for the best while being prepared for the worst."

Hilman turned again after he had parted from John Morris at the gate. "I have advised the women folk that fever might cause some little trouble, and it would be advisable for you to stay as long as you can when you return. The fever will rise before morning, but you needn't be alarmed if—the patient can be kept still or nearly so. Otherwise in that case hemorrhage will undo it all. Should you find it necessary send for me—quick!"

Through the long night Mrs. Wilkes and Elizabeth took turn watching with John Morris and Roger Wilkes. The wounded man made several efforts to remove the bandage from his waist. And as the doctor had forewarned the fever rose as night waned to dawn, and from the patient's lips came mutterings and disjointed sentences with here and there a sharp command or an occasional oath. Nearly always he was at the mine. Names he spoke at times, more often not, while the men listened and understood.

During one interval, when Elizabeth sat on the cover-

let beside him, it became necessary for her to call her mother's help before he calmed. Then, quicker than their quickest action he rose upright, held forth his fingers, as though holding out some heavy thing, then, listening intently, laughed. Here and there he mentioned the word "Pietrecco," and once as they smoothed his pillows he muttered:

"That was natural—his own—that hound would rob a thousand."

They asked him if he felt better, attributing his sudden silence to more material ease, and he retorted savagely: "It ought to have killed him!" As he said this he looked straight at Elizabeth, to whom it seemed impossible that incoherence was behind those eyes. But they were unnaturally bright. He fancied she was Esther. He reached up his hand and set it gently on her shoulder. Without diffidence her own, soft and cool, sought it and held it near her heart.

"Poor Esther," he said, "I thought you had gone . . . Rummel . . . yes . . . he's gone . . ."

This seemed to have increased the fever, and at Mrs. Wilkes's suggestion Elizabeth spoke to him of that they thought would not quicken the fast-pulsing blood. She endeavored to divert the wandering mind by asking him if he recalled the story he had told her of Collson's dogs —of the door ajar and the troubled, aged watcher beneath the pine. But his mind ran not on the humorous part of it. He spoke of a girl and a basket, and that the girl had told him "Margaret would be glad to have him call on her," and laughed strangely, while Elizabeth conceived a sudden desire for the outside air.

Her mother took her place, but was relieved again presently. After her return Elizabeth remained with him until the new sun flooded the room and the blinds were drawn to shut it out. When the doctor came John Morris took such comfort as he might to his wife, from

whose couch throughout that night incessant prayers had sought The Throne, in thought beside her boy and watching him in tender spirit.

Toward midnight of the second day he had a slight relapse. Ambridge was delayed but had telegraphed instructions, and said he would be there early next day. The nurse had preceded him. She and Mrs. Wilkes were alone witnesses of the second incoherence, in which the fevered man spoke of "old butties—good fellows, too—" and, "it's a pity—pity—some of 'em might die—for. . . that . . ." Then, turning suddenly and with fists clenched he struck at the pillow beside him, followed by alarm depicted on the features of one of the women and none whatever on those of the nurse. She listened complacently, and gently but determinedly forced him to his place.

"You imps of hell!" he cried, "aren't three enough that you would shoot running men?" which outburst brought not only pain but a measure of sanity. Through opiates administered by the nurse he found rest in sleep.

* * * * *

Ambridge had been and was leaving.

"I thought it would never end; it seemed interminable," Mrs. Wilkes told the great surgeon when together they left the room. They two had been boy and girl companions.

"All such cases do—to the friends, naturally," he responded. "Really, though, it was only two hours, including the operation. The young man was unconscious exactly one hour and thirty minutes."

Then he left her and spoke aside to Hilman regarding certain precautions to be taken. A dispatch was to be sent him at stated intervals, later a letter each day. In event of certain complications Ambridge was to return. He went down to a waiting carriage. Effie Wilkes followed him and would know the truth.

"Well," said he from his seat, smiling at her intensity, "I reckon, Effie Wilkes, you are too old for subterfuge," from which we may assume to our several satisfactions the relative amount of ingenuousness in the two persons facing each other. His hand sought her shoulder as she stood beside the carriage step, and his eyes looked into hers as he told her her son—for thus he intentionally or unintentionally called his patient—would not attend the mine for a long while. "But there's the best of hope, the best of prospect for ultimate recovery. He has untainted blood and a giant's strength and the stamina given only to the sons of generations of men such as——."

Mrs. Wilkes interrupted him.

"Such as they who do—that?" her eyes sought, and her finger pointed contemptuously to, the blackened heap where the buildings at *The Effie* once stood.

The brow of the great man clouded. "No, madam," said he, quite impatient with comparison not only odious but irrelevant to the case under discussion, "and yes. He's somewhat different: merely such as the best of them mentally in normal mood: no better than the average physically. I know," he added with positive pride and emphasis, "for I, too, was a miner, you'll remember . . . My best cases have been among my own kind and—his," alluding to the man upstairs. "Like a trout to the fly they have risen splendidly to my effort—gone more than the patient's requisite half-way. That's why I have the best of hope regarding the young man."

Effie Wilkes felt she had deserved the rebuke. Her cheeks flushed with a faint sign of pride as she apologized. He accepted her apology with the words:

"We are all brutes, Effie, you remember the classic told us at our beloved Washington and Jefferson," pulling on his gloves preparatory to starting, "when Reason has temporarily vacated the seat of Control," which the former schoolma'am was generous enough to acknowledge as truth.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SOLDIERS AND PEACE

Following the affair in the lane the spirit of revenge ran riot throughout the entire vicinity. County officers were overpowered; soldiers of the commonwealth were called out.

They came—being for the most part working boys themselves, with kindly leanings toward the strikers, but disciplined to the point of doing their sworn duty at all events. They did so, but had no need to kill. While they were there no shot was fired with a miner as a target; none was needed. *They* came to our country really to preserve the peace. The conservatives among the miners combined forces with them to accomplish this meritorious purpose. Their headquarters were in one of the wide spaces between Calabrué's and the big mine, since near Carbonia incendiaryism had worked its most vicious way. Smaller detachments were detailed to look after the various mines.

The display of friendliness remained unbroken. Toward the end one frequently remarked the trim uniform mingling among the miner youth in a game of "seven up." This when off duty, of course. And even more often, considering the time Cupid had to make his arrows, could they be seen playing a game of hearts with the pretty girls of our village. Nor can we in truth confine this. It went on as often during picket as furlough. But if there be any punishment to follow let us be fair, and partial to neither side: The girls, like Barkis, were also willing!

As day followed day with no sign of strife the soldiers left for home, leaving behind them much good-will but many bad hearts. By the time the civil officers reached the point of inquiry into the originating affray affairs were on a fair way to settlement. The verdict was a compromise.

"The whole affair seems to be a bad mistake," said The Public. False information conveyed to the deputies as to the fighting equipment of the strikers. They—the deputies—mistook broomsticks for Winchester barrels, there was no doubt about it, and aimed at the trees to scare the men.

"Bad marksmanship," said The Coroner.

"You thought they were well armed, you say?" queried the miners' attorney, at the hearing in Colville.*

"We did indade, yer 'Onor," retorted the "officer" of The Army Of Protection.

"Then you thought wrong," came the trenchant answer, accompanied by a formidable paper on which was much writing transcribed from the police records of the State of Pennsylvania. "Does this sound like rifles and ammunition? Listen!" So he read:

Therefore, etcetra, on the person of John Morris, arrested after the riot, several documents, duplicates of notices warning his followers to keep the peace; further: several letters of a business form, one ordinary pen-knife, a few coins, pipe, tobacco and a pencil.

On Joseph Farley: one broken broom-handle, a pipe, plug of chewing tobacco and one packet of Five Brothers, some matches.

*Those interested and desirous of reading the account of this affair in full would do well to refer to the files of THE COLVILLE WEEKLY NEWS of that period, from which these excerpts are copied.

On Thomas Jefferson Adams, one twenty-two calibre revolver, apparently unused.

"And there, gentlemen, you have the general description of them all. The gun found on the miner T. J. Adams was the only one taken from all the men, and I have here witnesses who have handled such things many years, who will swear the toy Adams had in his possession had not been fired in a month. This, Adams himself, being duly sworn, admitted that he had no 'shells' else he 'might hev took a pop at 'em just for the fun of it.' To which I will add that it is the opinion of reputable witnesses that there would have resulted more 'fun' than damage."

In reply to the opposing legal light the miners' attorney admitted that undeniably the miners rioted, and, after the killing of their comrades, burned. Undeniably they did not "riot with intent to murder." "Their object," said he, "was to keep the imported strike-breakers from taking the bread out of their mouths, as Mr. Adams put it. Of course we admit the technical error of our clients. Every man has the right to work or leave it. The miners could not see it thus, and tried to keep the new men out by mere physical force, and not by force of arms as is stated. They were doing so when the deputies fired among them.

"They dispersed at once, leaving some dead, some wounded, among them, as it happened, General Manager Morris who at the moment of the first shooting by the deputies was, probably unknown to the latter, at least one may so assume, among the miners pleading with them to go back. I need not say which way they were going.

"What happened after the shooting is another question not to be decided here. The incendiaryism is a matter for The Court and Grand Jury. We are here regarding the disposition of the shooting affray when Eldred

Morris and several of his miners were shot. And before you Gentlemen of The Coroner's Jury give your verdict I wish to read further from these papers regarding the weapons said to have been in possession of my clients.

Further examined the person of William John Davis, alias One-Eyed-Bill, and found the following, to-wit: two pairs of spectacles, one pick-handle, broken, two pipes and one paper of Weyman's, some matches, some chewing tobacco and one glass-eye.

to which some clerk of indubitable and tender youth has here made in fine red-inked parenthesis (For use on Sundays!)” concluded the attorney, assuming a dignity none of the jurors exhibited when he handed the paper around.

The verdict was satisfactory to those concerned. We of The United States had not yet been shocked into the clearer vision which imprisoned the gun-men (so called deputies) in the Roosevelt, New Jersey, cases. Striking miners were still considered fair game, to be shot at the pleasure and whim of the hunters hired at so much per diem to do the killing as indifferently as the Polish butcher at the Stock Yards of Chicago. The season was always “open.” Carbonia considered itself lucky to escape hanging for letting itself get shot at, to quote our friend Gawan.

There came to us later certain information concerning a visit made by several participants in the hearing of which we have mentioned a little, in which testimony of the wounded men was taken. Also it was rumored that the leniency with which the case was handled was prompted as much by Eldred Morris's and Roger Wilkes's insistence as by Public Opinion. Both thought the affair had caused misery enough.

In the meantime for all concerned the crucial period at the big house passed slowly enough. Hilman was in

attendance almost constantly. Elizabeth, under necessity of being somewhere, since they would not allow her to be in the sick-room but a few minutes at a time, and that not very often, spent much time with Emily Morris. For the rest she perused those books they had read together and the hymns they had sung the day before the shooting. The leaves containing the latter she tore out boldly, and placed next her own bosom's flesh because *his* hands had touched them last.

Foolish, wasn't it?

Perhaps your "Elizabeth" can tell you better than I why she did that, and in what way it gratified her desire for him in a degree. This happened the day Ambridge came again for the second time, having received the call he had feared. If she were to be denied him, as was thought very likely that day, she would treasure the last things his hands had touched when he was with her and well, Elizabeth unblushingly told Ambridge as he took her arm in his and told her with fatherly solicitude one thing she must not do that day. He had daughters of his own who had sweethearts.

"Under no circumstances must you go near your—er—the young man's room again until—." Here the surgeon stopped. He was feeling a pulse worse than the one upstairs.

"Until what, Doctor?" she asked.

"Until you are—are braver," he turned the word.

"Then I'll be—I'll be brave right now," she faltered piteously, and immediately burst into a flood of tears.

Anxiety had left its mark on her. For many nights she had slept hardly at all. Yet despite her giving way just then the interval had steeled her to meet the crisis which was coming with greater fortitude. She had gained sympathy as well as given it at Emily Morris's. For the invalid mother and John Morris the suspense was almost unbearable, the strike non-existent. For The

Local President the union might die if need be, if only his boy lived. And an old man wearing the great-coat of Civil War days, accompanied by Pete and Nellie, wore a deeper path than had ever existed before between The Batch and the big house on the hill.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CRISIS

For reasons not necessary to mention here I was unable to be present in Carbonia during the crisis on the outcome of which Eldred Morris's life itself depended. But I have beside me as I write certain papers which describe this most critical period of the miner's existence. These were written for me particularly, and so vividly portray what in part transpired that I deem them essential in the history of this miner's life. Being from his own hand they are necessarily incomplete, ending before our desire.

They state that shortly before the great surgeon's arrival for the second and last time they had taken Elizabeth away from her sweetheart. The description of this enforced parting, which both feared might be forever, is so pathetic, from what I can gather, that I refrain from detail. Instead I hurry on to the man, still alert but very weak, watching Ambridge "take from a large bag he had brought with him a rubber-like covering and a wicked-looking tray of tools, which he proceeded to assort as indifferently as a miner chooses his favorite picks.

"With this rubber concern," these papers read, "he covered himself, leaving only his eyes and mouth unclosed. Even the latter was shielded by gauze. Hilman's part of the affair was merely to give ether and hand the instruments. The day before he had performed all the menial preliminaries. Poor Hilman! He and the specialist put one in mind of some of the young men at our mines who were drivers of mules and diggers of

coal when I was, and who are the same today. Both these doctors are graduates of Jefferson Medical College and yet . . . one makes his thousands while the other hardly gets enough to live decently. Yet both had the same opportunity to advance and both were of the same class."

This is obviously an indirect allusion to the fact that most of the young men who were miners with Eldred Morris are still such, their nights being spent loafing in the company-store or in some shack playing seven-up or euchre, while he spent his over books and papers and the study of his craft. He continued:

"But at last all was ready, and my heart pounding so I was ashamed of it. I felt sure the doctors—all of them from miles around were there, and the nurses (they had two, then)—could hear it. If they did they said nothing. Instead Hilman dabbed the thing over my mouth, and it seemed as if I had taken a lot of water into my lungs. This rather startled me. I wondered if when the matter got really serious I would make a struggle. I was anxious to get to that point, for it seemed an interminable length of time between each dab of the cone, and the silence with it all was oppressive. Then somebody broke it. I couldn't tell truthfully who it was, for the voice seemed strangely unfamiliar and far away.

"'Just breathe easier,' it said; 'it won't hurt you . . . close your eyes tighter else it will make them smart . . .'

"Then the silence again. Every breath I took now was burning hot and smothered me to the extent of desiring to fight it off."

Morris probably meant the anaesthetic agent.

"I could hear my heart drumming in my ears, and the exhaust of an engine somewhere outside." (No doubt this was the fan engine at *The Effie*, which they had by that time improvised.) "I wondered how many more cracks it would make, and whether my heart would stop.

It was going very slow then, and all at once seemed to stop altogether.

"Then followed a void, broken all of a sudden by a myriad sparks shooting in a world of space. I seemed relieved of all physical weight . . . my body was floating at will among the starry clusters. Everything was easier now; the trepidation was past. But I was still thinking of Elizabeth and mother. I had just made up my mind to tell Ambridge to stop a while. There was something I had forgotten to tell Elizabeth to tell mother. I started to frame my words, I thought, when crack!! the pyrotechnics all gathered in a bunch and burst right in front of my eyes and knocked all thought of the women downstairs, the men at the mine, everything pertaining to my past, present and future into utter oblivion . . . The display faded as suddenly as it came and . . . I knew no more."

* * * * *

I learned from others that at that moment Mrs. Wilkes and Elizabeth were together. Constantly back and forth along the stone flags, screened from the prying eyes of occasional groups passing and repassing the big house since what was happening became generally known, Roger Wilkes paced nor could have no comfort. At the house across the swail the father of the now unconscious man dared not leave Emily Morris for a moment. The matter was as critical for her as for her son. Tom had called and gone and said he would come again soon.

As for Wilkes he was but following a custom he and his chief mine official had in common. The secluded garden and the long walks between banks of flowers gave good opportunity to walk off agitation, if it were possible. For the old mining man it was not possible that day. Into his life, as indeed into the erstwhile reluctant Effie's, Eldred Morris had grown step by step as the son they had not. For them he had really become such. And never as that day had Roger walked those stones.

Not even on the day following the explosion at the mine nearby had he felt the same sinking at heart anent the recurrent dissection of a given thing.

At infrequent turns he went into the stable and spoke awhile with the hostler and to the horse which Eldred had often ridden. The sensitive, highly-bred animal occasionally mistook the tread of Wilkes for the younger man, for he was more accustomed to Morris than the woman whose horse he was. He neighed wistfully for the rider who had forsaken the saddle, and Wilkes spoke to him as to a human as he stroked the fine arching neck:

“He’ll come again, Laddie; he’ll come again.”

Then for a full hour suspense prodded his feet. They were to let him know when consciousness returned. There had come no word as yet. The minute finger on his watch crept tortuously. All was not well or they would have let him know, yet he feared to go in and ask. He risked a look into one of the lower rooms as he reached the house on one of the turns. He saw only an auburn-haired head buried in his wife’s lap; the aging fingers smoothing the combed waves. All was quiet.

This started him off again feverishly, trying to smoke and as often throwing away the cigars. The horse heard the heavy step again and called. The old man went in.

“It’s not over yet, Laddie,” he told him; “not over yet.”

Then he went out, but the stones seemed all one: phlox drummondii mixed strangely with the alyssum bordering the path.

* * * * *

The first thing Eldred said after the return of consciousness was “Where’s Elizabeth?” They told him and sent for her. She went—after an appreciable length of time. Elizabeth Wilkes was a woman. She had held up all the time one would not have been surprised to see her sink beneath the strain, but when that strain

was over she collapsed. The delay was quite as well. She could but have grasped his hand and left with volumes of words she desired to say unspoken. Talk was obviously, just then, forbidden.

But the day came when Elizabeth was allowed to remain a while and even speak with the patient. Almost her first words were self-incriminative. She referred to the Sunday he had been so undecided, and in her heart lay heavily the suspicion that what she had said about his remaining firm to his convictions at any cost was partly, if not altogether, responsible for what had happened.

"If I hadn't said that, Eldred," she cried, taking his hands in hers, "it might have been different."

He stopped her by pulling her feebly to him, not yet daring to move from the position in which he was placed, and kissed her again and again. This was the first time they had been alone for oh, so long! And the accommodating nurse was at dinner.

"Then that Law of Compensation we were reading in Emerson had a hand in it, little girl," he told her, smiling. "It has made you more dear to me than ever, and, I hope, me more dear to you." Following which sentiment expressed she drank deep of that compensation, while the newly-born hope of the future's happiness blotted out despondency, and tears of incrimination turned to tears of joy.

After a long pause which neither evinced any desire to break he said:

"It was simply a case of a bad boy wanting his own way and getting the rod for it. I caused the trouble by holding firm to my convictions, dear girl, in the first place, and then, happening at the danger spot at the crucial moment, I did what any man would have done to avoid bloodshed, if possible. That I didn't wasn't my fault. It flashed across me regarding you and mother

and the women in the village, sweetheart, some of them not long married, some, like, us, about to be, women I know as well as you—almost—and particularly that one you told me to——.”

He stopped abruptly. Elizabeth had placed her hand very softly over his mouth, while above it, and through the slightly dull lustre of the dark eyes, shone the roguish twinkle characteristic of the man.

“Alright,” he agreed, taking her hand away; “I won’t.”

But she clung lovingly to his fingers, squeezing tightly to her soft bosom a hand which had lost its grip and its color with the ebbing blood. He spoke again:

“That’s less easily done than desired, where there are an unreasoning mob on one hand and an undisciplined body of armed men on the other. Personally I regret the latter part of the affair more than all else. But,” he continued in more cheerful vein: “I reckon the whole thing is one of the ‘considerations’ and ‘good wills’ thrown in gratis with the purchase of coal mines and the lands and appurtenances thereto, or for that matter the taking over of management, the same as the more serious explosions.”

“Then,” queried Elizabeth, smiling into his eyes, “I suppose ‘the appurtenances thereto’ include me?” which irrelevance prompted Eldred Morris to muster all his strength and pull her down to him again.

“Not today, anyhow,” he said. “The relative values place you in the position of the ‘present’ on an anniversary, the mines as the ‘tag’ as I see them just now,” to which he might have added more but for the upraised finger of the nurse just entering the door.

Elizabeth removed herself from the bedside and straightened her rumpled skirts. Then she went out, nor would they let her stay with him for several days, for which a certain high temperature following this visit was held responsible.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN WHICH ONE TALKS FIRST PRINCIPLES; ANOTHER TALKS SENSE

But the day came when he would not let her go so soon as she came in and kissed him. He told the nurse he would ring or send Elizabeth for her if needed: that she could take a nap, not having had much sleep the night before, since the second nurse was gone now. And, assured by the gleaming light of health-returning obvious to trained specimens of her order, white-cap left the two together.

After the preliminaries of necessity or otherwise interspersed with—!*?!**? etcerta, he told her he had been thinking of an incident which proved the truth of the assertion that history repeats itself.

“It happened in my school days, when I was a kid, I mean, and the history act was on a smaller scale than this last one we’ve just gone through.”

“You’re a kid now,” Elizabeth interposed; “my kid . . .” patting the over-sinewy hand lying on the counterpane.

“I was Emily Morris’s, then. Poor mother! Is she any better today? and did you send that basket and note for me?”

“I did, and she is better, sir,” Elizabeth replied with mock courtesy.

“And dad?”

“He came to ask about you before you were awake: said he would like to wish you good-bye before he goes away.”

The eyes of the man on the bed flew wide open. "Away!" he said, "at his age?"

Elizabeth picked in silence for a moment at a ridge in the coverlet. Her head was bent as she said quietly:

"Your order, Eldred, included your father, but not Tom; didn't you think of that when you sent it to Uncle Turley? You said only 'none who took a leading part,' and—" Elizabeth wisely said no more, remaining silent for him to think it over. Ultimately she added:

"The men at the other mines have gone in regardless of the predicament it leaves their leaders in. The union ordered the miners everywhere to do the best they could for themselves until the Arbitration Committee, appointed by the President, shall have gathered sufficient data and given its decision. The little bit of strike-pay your father had is stopped, so he told me out by the gate when he went away," she drooned quietly, sympathetically, "and your mother's illness has put them in a condition which makes work imperative."

"Poor mother," Eldred Morris repeated again, almost to himself. Elizabeth started to say something but he thrust his hand into hers and said, "Wait, please," and himself waited, saying nothing for a long while. Evidently he thought much, and the sensitive heart beside him, hoping the news would modify his attitude, fell into his mood willingly. When he looked up into her eyes again her quick perception saw therein what she believed a hope fulfilled. She saw in his eyes a light: a wondering, larger light: the light of greater tolerance. He spoke:

"Elizabeth." And she:

"Well?"

"I'm still foggy."

Elizabeth smiled but her hopes sank.

"I can't see that Victory has perched altogether on the right standard," and her hopes were raised again. "I've

been thinking of a *principle* so strong—whether right or wrong is not exactly clear at this moment—that will bring to its adherents and those they love great suffering and long continued, yet a principle that holds its own pretty well with hundreds of thousands of sturdy Americans: a principle that is literally phoenix in its ability to rise from the ashes of temporary destruction, and so vital that it reaches Washington. I've been wondering if, after all, it can be altogether wrong? An agitator—with all due respect to your father and to mine—may cast a glamour over, and spell-bind, a few hobble-de-hoys with his crude orations, particularly if said hobble have been working steadily for some time and want a holiday and see no way to get one except to strike, but there must be more than that to it to draw five hundred thousand men,* two-thirds of whom have wives and families dependent on them, from steady work and a full cupboard to idleness and starvation, mustn't there? And particularly when thousands of those men are fellows with mental qualities not excelled by no men on earth having no more education to broaden their vision. I know, dear," he went on, talking quietly to the bowed head, "for I'm a limb of that tree which bears such fruit, and a 'wicked limb' I'll bet that tree thinks Eldred Morris, just now," he laughed gently.

"It's the latter I started to speak of," Elizabeth explained when he paused; "of your father and mother. Of the two he looks the worse. He seems old and shaken with worry, Eldred. Couldn't you—couldn't you do something for him, dear, for your mother's sake and Tom's? I spoke to papa," the fair pleader continued,

*The strike at THE EFFIE and its contemporaneous operations was but a local manifestation of nation-wide unrest. Nearly half a million miners alone were involved in periods ranging from a few weeks to many months. The Author shared the suffering of seven months striking at the mine where he was then employed.

"and he said it was 'up to you.' You had ordered that no one having a leading part should work for the company at any of its mines. But for the deserving is there no indirect way you could——."

"Elizabeth!" he exclaimed querulously.

"Well, direct, then?" she insisted. "And there's another, only that poor Margaret has had nothing to do with the strike, but her brothers being out and now—Margaret Farley, I mean," she amended. "You know she was—you know, now," Elizabeth blushed the color of the rose in her hair, "without me saying," she tapped his smiling face gently, and he nodded assent. "Well, after the explosion down there she came home, you know, and she has recently been confined with a dear little girl, Eldred"

"Well?" he prompted. The smile was gone; he expected to hear Margaret had gone to her husband, as is the way all good wives must do sometime. It proved not quite so bad as that.

"That is all, only that Hilman says she'll die if she doesn't have better nourishment, and she won't let them get pauper aid for her."

And again the man lapsed into a long silence. Elizabeth broke it by asking:

"You know Margaret Thomas, Eldred?" mentioning her maiden name.

"I ought to after the hall—" the light came again to his eyes and the tears to hers, so he desisted. Her voice had trembled in almost foolish iteration of a known fact. What he felt he did not say. The womanly heart was urged to pity for the young mother, regret for insinuation and wrong long past and forgotten by others—almost—and desire to make amends in some practical way greatly agitated Elizabeth just then. And equally earnest as she Eldred Morris desired to help, but sought for some solution which would not compromise him nor weaken his stand with many others.

Like Elizabeth he had wondered at the great moral change wrought in Farley by his love for the village belle ere they left Carbonia. He had watched with interest a marriage in which virtue and constancy to an ideal, and sweet womanliness, had won over degradation which is generally the victor, unfortunately. Margaret Farley, with whom as Margaret Thomas, he had shared the rymthic step, was starving, and the newborn babe for which she had gone deep into The Valley of The Shadow would starve and die also. The young mother, and the dimpled duplicate of herself and the young miner she had lost by one of the tragedies of The Underground, would travel still deeper into The Great Unknown, perhaps, because of—him. He looked at Elizabeth, and fancied her return from that journey only to find starvation awaiting, and it became a tangible thing to be avoided, let men say what they would.

"Give me that pencil, please," he told her, "and that piece of paper," pointing to a prescription blank lying on the table where his drugs were kept.

He wrote and erased and wrote again. Then after another effort he gave Elizabeth the note, while on his face there came that complexity you've seen on a bad boy's before now, when he went more or less bravely to take punishment for a deed precipitately done.

Elizabeth laid the slip of paper aside, and with it she placed, in an envelope, several large gold pieces. Bending over him after her return from her dressing-table she said in playful secrecy: "I had saved them for our wedding journey, but—" What other pleasantries passed between them we need not indite.

An hour or two later she returned and told him she had delivered the note to Margaret and a verbally whispered bit of good news for John Morris. And she told him how Emily Morris had cried when she said what she had to say there, and how she—Elizabeth—herself

had enjoyed a good cry also, in company with the young mother at the crippled Thomas's, no obtuse man being anywhere in sight. Plied for reason she said she didn't know unless it was because she—being now able in a slight measure to make amends to a young woman she really liked well—now—had either to cry or laugh, and that the former in that particular premise made her feel better!

"You silly kid," he said, but he did not mean it, though the epithet of love reminded him of something he did.

"I was going to school, then, as I started to tell you before you started for the village, and I had an apple, also considerable sympathy as boys go, I reckon. There were four of us, and three bit according to direction. The last one bit my finger in his greed to get what I reserved to myself. I danced and he ran, but I was the fleeter. When I'd licked him the apple wasn't of much account, but there were candy-sticks and other apples to come, and I always watched him closely after that."

Then he told her of her father being up to see him after she had gone on her errand of mercy. "He tells me the last man has gone in who can go, and I've sent word for MacDonald to watch what new material he puts on. Dynamite is harmless, Pet, if you keep the caps away and don't get too near the fire, and I think dad's frozen so hard he won't thaw for a while."

Then, when he was rested, for strength was far from full as yet, he added:

"But if he should, and the flood of union rhetoric pour forth over us again, there would be much to warrant it. While it seems barbarous to deny a man the right to work and sustain himself at his trade without outside interference, and under any terms he desires, yet there is much to be said against it, and we must needs have accepted the principle if we had been weaker. Dad is right in that many instances wages can only be upheld

by such means. One must also admit his assertion that unfair employers would eventually bring the living standard, through their constant undercutting to get trade, low as Europe or Asia if the great body of Americans were not opposed to it. The man, employer or employee, exhibiting that tendency, is as inimical to the welfare of his community, and trade, as the thief who goes from house to house taking a sack of flour from this one this week and a flitch of bacon next, and repeats the process. Through such ignorance certain men who employ and others who are employed become festering thorns in the body industrial, and the majority say he shall change his method or he shall get out. They fail to take into account that there are employers as well as employees who would not do such things."

"The Wilkes Coal Company, through its managing officer, Mr. Eldred Morris,' for instance," Elizabeth smiled patiently, rearranging some flowers she had brought up, freshly cut, for his room, and indulging in his philosophy not because she was interested in the least. Another time she would have turned the subject bluntly by word or yawn. She allowed her eyes to set as though in concentration and following him as he desired. Assuredly he was "foggy" to the extent of being unaware of her duplicity. She urged casually:

"The Wilkes Coal Company?"

"If you like; and therein they are wrong. Can you repeat that clause in The Constitution of The United States, dear?"

Elizabeth tried, blundered, stopped in confusion.

"Never mind," he said soothingly, setting her hand between his own, then at once changing to arrogance: "They're wrong anyhow. That clause must be amended or they'll forever stay wrong, and that function is The Public's through its legislative officers, and not the miners' nor the employers'. The Public will deal rightly

with it sometime, but there'll be many a Margaret Farley and her new-born babe starving first, sweetheart . . . If it come soon it will be because of the willingness of the John Morris's and Roger Wilkes's to suffer, and, by their very multiplicity of numbers and suffering compel national action resulting in a Permanent Board of Compulsory Arbitration.

"Until then The Powerless will continue to chop futilely at the branch to destroy the tree, instead of interviewing The Gardener with respect to grafting on wood of better fruitage. The fact that we did not 'chop' had as much to do with our success as anything else. If we hadn't kept within the law do you think the Governor would have sent troops to our aid? We would have been among the quelled instead of the quelling. We were right, of course, and why couldn't all the numbers of men we employ see that—oh, fiddlesticks!

"Same old riddle of the ages, Elizabeth. Why is one man a Democrat and another a Republican? one a Catholic willing to die for his belief and another willing to die in protestation against that same belief? Such diametrically-opposed ideas never will find a common meeting ground so long as the written instrument of their common nation guarantees them the privilege of causing themselves and others distress untold by fighting it out on the line of 'Might Makes Right,' which we know it doesn't, don't we, dear?" he asked pensively, and with a little trembling of agitation just as the nurse came in, unasked, and the girl beside him jumped from her seat.

Elizabeth colored like a school-miss caught in a forbidden tete-a-tete, for the second time that day straightening the immaculately-laundered skirts and putting forth her jewelled fingers to her hair. Yet despite the interruption the man was not done.

"There's one thing missing which might remove—I believe would remove—the need of compulsion, and that is

the broader breadth and greater comprehensiveness of men when educated. For what is the use of going through the furnace of all those years of study, which most men hate, if the refining process do not melt the angular points of bigotry and narrow-mindedness and self? Surely there would be no need of such strenuous measures on the part of laboring men if all employers, who are generally educated men, would deal in a way that——.”

Suddenly Morris stopped, confounded somewhat by the suggestion of conflicting elements in his own logic. But doubt passed when he raised his head, for his little dissertation had been accomplished with his eyes set on a spot from which they had not moved but rarely till then. This was a habit he had formed for the better concentration of mind. In the door he saw a round, smiling, face bubbling over with long-suppressed mirth, at what he did not realize just then. His academic learning had not helped him to always satisfactorily analyze those smiles, nor the tears so closely allied. And quite as often he failed to satisfactorily dissect her ready submission or stubborn desire to do as she pleased. Here was an enigma, indeed, with its laced-elbows almost touching the door-frames on either side of arms crooked, and fingers adjusting hair, which all his philosophy could not solve. He asked somewhat nervously:

“What do you think of it? Don’t you think it would help wonderfully toward gaining that great end?”

“I don’t know,” Elizabeth replied complacently, her rosy cheeks dimpling. “I was thinking of old Jimmy Wilmot, and what a wonderful effect The Constitutional Right had on mother’s chickens,” she said, tripping lightly away.

EPILOGUE

Happiness almost unalloyed fairly flew away with all sense of time at the big house above The Four Rows, and never so fast as during that blissful, anticipatory, period preceding the coming of Eldred II. Nor lagged it much even unto one morning when, with his arm around his wife's soft shoulders, as the couple stood for a moment watching the little boy play, Eldred Morris exclaimed:

"Five years today since we are married, Elizabeth? Why it doesn't seem five months"

"But here are the roguish proofs of it, sweetheart," replied she, her eyes wandering from the little boy to a tiny maid clutching her mamma's skirt, and between Elizabeth and Eldred Morris there passed an elliptic phrase both understood to mean that life was indeed a pleasant thing after all, its occasional sorrows but serving as a necessary background for the better illumination of its joys.

Even so, dear reader, it had been for Eldred and Elizabeth Morris; not alone in that calm and beautiful period, but because Time had brought nearly all our own people and still more to love and respect. Most all of those we knew are still dwelling near The Four Rows; Calabrué's still furnishes macaroni at "wholesale" to its "boarders," and Maloney's much froth at retail, to ever-increasing numbers of the late Pietrecco's "cousins" and equally close relations of the one time Loud-Mouthed Rossi.

Across the field Emily Morris is confined for long periods. She gets sufficiently better at times to spend a day at the big house with Eldred I and II, Elizabeth

and Little Emily. The cottage beyond the coppice where the coy canary sang and Elizabeth cried is all Emily Morris's own now. The deed to it and a five acre patch, in part of which are two Jerseys and a lot of chickens, was the mining engineer's tribute to his first teacher in English on her last birthday.

And here—a small landed gentleman indeed—John Morris has not ceased from troubling, but is, from the immediate adversities of mining life, at rest. His hopes for unionism throughout the entire district are with one insignificant exception fulfilled. Agitation wholesome and persistent for ever broader participancy of the National Government in mining affairs grows partly at least because of the humble miner's efforts. Human Mercy (labeled "Compensation") for the victims of accident in our tragic craft is now the chiefest desire of John Morris's heart, not alone in Pennsylvania, where at this writing (this part of the volume was apparently written just previous to the passage of Pennsylvania's eminently humanitarian law of compensation for injuries—Editor) it seems assured, and in West Virginia where it has now for some time been in operation, but throughout the nation.

To this end I wrote for him, and there were published in *The Colliery Engineer* and other mining journals§ articles bodying forth his ideas on this subject in detail. Later excerpts from private letters and these papers were read before The United States Senate.* The fact, also, that an embodiment of the same in a paper read before

§ Reynolds: "The Possibilities of A Federal Liability Law."
Reynolds: "What Shall We Do With Our Industrial Wounded?"

*Used in speech before U. S. Senate advocating Federal participancy in mine welfare, which resulted in the institution of the present efficient United States Bureau of Mines. Use of articles and letters requested by Charles Dick (Ohio), then Chairman of The Committee on Mines and Mining in United States Senate.

a conference of mining men in West Virginia[†] was followed by the immediate appointment on the part of the Governor of that State of a committee of investigation, ultimately led to adequate provision for all dependents caused by mining accidents in that commonwealth, gave John and Emily Morris great joy, even more, perhaps, than a later recognition by The Wilkes Coal Company of the union.

Nor must we forget our old friend Collson. In a garden back of The Batch the old lampman cultivates his special brand of tobacco and cherishes the last spark of life in a doddering old hound. Nellie succumbed to the cold long ago. And every Sunday morning, when "All's Well" at *The Effie* and Eldred Morris is at home, one may see going across the fields a well-built man smoking a silver-mounted meerschaum, and carrying a basket of —well—there is nothing cooked at The Batch nowadays except an occasional pot of tea or coffee, and not even that on Sundays. In a special corner of that basket there is reserved a place for a quart jar of good Mocha which Elizabeth makes herself and little daughter stirs the milk in.

And with Eldred on this mission, when the days are fine, one sees often as not an immaculately-dressed Little Emily of three, escorted, by a trim lad of four, to the yard where the pine still stands.

At the big house Eldred Morris, M. E., is no longer paramount, although more of a breadth in physique and intellect. The Arbiter of all opinions there, and including those of John Morris and Emily as well as Grandpa Roger and Grandma Effie, is a veritable replica of the engineer's boyhood. Eldred Morris Junior has of late graduated from dresses to linen pants and blouse, and

[†]Plea for Workmen's Compensation before Mining Conference held in Charleston, West Va., from paper written by W. H. Reynolds; delivered in Conference by S. C. Reynolds.

with the complement of tan sandals and tan stockings considers himself quite on sartorial level with Emily: aged 3. But he doesn't stay thus as does the little maid.

Eldred II has as yet no sense of certain doubt. To him his papa and his papa's "den" comprise the seven wonders, and his big dark eyes would question even the blue ones of his mamma as to an impossible assertion that there ever existed anything equal. Perhaps the fact that the little boy is allowed sometimes to carry the aluminum "Wolf" lamp, or, being lifted up, to peep at the wonderlands beyond the transit-lens, has somewhat to do with this opinion. Perhaps it is because he is allowed in preference to Little Emily to accompany the mining engineer on journeys from home lasting a week or more. One can only assume but not question the psychology of a little boy.

But one may with propriety confidently assert the opinion that if The Darwinian Theory regarding heredity and selection hold good, by the time Eldred Morris ease up in the great industry the latest Eldred will be ready and eager to step into his place.

Let us hope that for generations to come the deeper and newer mines of the vast and almost virgin coal fields of Washington and Greene Counties of Pennsylvania, and the measures of the more southern state of West Virginia, will not lack mining engineers and mine managers whose true manhood and ability, not less than their existence, may be traced back to the love of our own blue-eyed Elizabeth and the darker Eldred.

THE END.

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AN IDEA OF THE AUTHOR'S WORK REGARDING MINES AND MINING LIFE may be gained from the following excerpts culled from nearly 400 letters sent voluntarily regarding the books preceding IN THE CARBON HILLS. Space limits compel abbreviation. The prospective purchaser, however, may find in what follows some inkling as to what he may expect in the new book:

Part of a letter sent by the Editor of The World's Work after reading some of the author's manuscript regarding mining men and their lives: "Dear Mr. Reynolds: The feeling is strong within me that you can write a story of the real life of the mines, and write it in such a way that it will be regarded as a classic. * * * Such a story ought to be written. and you seem to be the man to write it. If you do I hope you will let me see it.

Sincerely yours,

EDGAR ALLEN FORBES."

That story is, after seven years' labor, written and offered you under the title of IN THE CARBON HILLS.

From THE NEWELL MIRROR Editorial by H. C. Gerdon, Editor, Newell, Iowa: "The story is of thrilling interest from start to finish. Love, pathos, hope, despair: the lights and shadows of life in a mining community are depicted on the pages of the book with a master hand. One cannot read the story without having the emotions of the soul stirred to their depths."

Rev. Richard Woods, 616 14th St., Huntington, West, Va.: "After reading every line my great difficulty is to find words with which to express my gratitude and opinion * * * the story is beautiful beyond my power to describe * * * Surely God led you to the production of this wonderful work, for while helping yourself you are helping others."

Orlando W. Olds, 726 Cedar St., Allentown, Pa.: I was so impressed and pleased with your book that I wanted everybody to read it. I appointed myself as voluntary agent and enclose payment in full for 24 copies for my friends. More to come."

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Henry Geiss, Mine Foreman, 339 No. Bromley Ave., Scranton, Pa.: "Having been a mine foreman for 24 years, and having lost my only brother in the mines under circumstances almost identical with those depicted therein, I read your book perhaps more critically than most, and certainly with greater interest, with the result that I am very much pleased with it."

The gentleman below had evidently been fooled with "book promises." Like many others he wrote as follows, and we are pleased to add, did as all the rest who wrote similarly: "Clay Lick, Ohio, Aug. 25th, 1911: Please send me, as per circulars, one copy. If satisfactory will remit payment, if not return the book. Chas. E. Cougill."

On Sept. 5th, he wrote: "Dear Mr. Reynolds: Enclose find payment. * * * The book is great!"

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Pittsburgh Gazette-Times: "Mr. Reynolds's stories are well worth reading for their sympathetic pictures of mining life."

THE FOLLOWING MAY ALSO BE OF INTEREST TO YOU:

Some years before the consolidation of THE COLLIER ENGINEER with COAL AGE, W. H. Reynolds was, after several years' contributory effort to its pages, offered the position of Assistant Editor on THE COLLIER ENGINEER Staff. Physical disability alone prevented acceptance. A few of the author's more recent contributions of purely mining articles, written in most cases with the collaboration of a brother, S. C. Reynolds, formerly Superintendent of Marianna Mines, and J. T. Reynolds, another brother, both now acting as Mine Inspectors, follow:

IDEAS OF PROVED VALUE IN MINE PRACTICE (A series of articles based on experience of twelve months superintendency of one of Pennsylvania's most dangerous gas-coal mines employing nearly a thousand men. Same mine "blew up" some time previously and killed every man and boy in it).

ROBBING MINE AIR OF ITS DANGER (The chief article of above series).

THE CHERRY VALLEY MINE DISASTER AND ITS LESSONS.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION.

LONGWALL: ITS MERITS AND DEMERITS UNDER VARYING CIRCUMSTANCES.

CAN VENTILATION BE SAFELY REDUCED AT FIRING TIME? (A reply to Mine Inspector John Verner).

THE USE OF STEAM TO COMBAT THE DUST MENACE.

THE FALLACY OF THE STONE DUST METHOD AS A UNIVERSAL REMEDY FOR DUST EXPLOSIONS.

THE "CARPET BAGGER" AND HIS EFFECT ON MINING.

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